UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO
3 1761 00355315 3

695

A. V. Packard

Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2007 with funding from
Microsoft Corporation

http://www.archive.org/details/memoirsofrachel00rachuoft

# MEMOIRS OF RACHEL.

BY

MADAME DE B—.

NEW YORK:
HARPER & BROTHERS, PUBLISHERS,
FRANKLIN SQUARE.
1858.

PN
2638
F44M4
1858

# PREFACE.

In order to form a correct judgment on celebrated persons, we should have a previous knowledge of the sphere in which they moved, of the circumstances in which they were placed, of the epoch at which their star arose.

Among those whose names the many-tongued dame has borne to the remotest corners of the civilized world, none have exemplified more forcibly than Rachel the truth of the Spanish adage which accords the palm not to the most deserving, but to him who arrives in time. Be this not understood, however, as a disparagement of the merit of the justly celebrated daughter of Israel. But, without in the least intending to detract from talent so universally acknowledged, it must be allowed that in her case Fortune came most opportunely to the aid of Genius, and that every event, from the commencement to the close of her career, justified to the utmost her surname of Felix.

Genius, even when seconded by persevering will, is not sufficient to conquer the heights Ambition would scale; it needs the concurrence of auspicious circumstances; and Chance, though aptly called the God of fools, has drawn from stagnant obscurity Napoleons, Shakspeares, and Newtons, who else had ignobly lived and ingloriously died.

The moment when Rachel came forward was that of a crisis. The public was weary of the clamors of the partisans of the old school and of those of the new. The question which had kindled so fierce a war between the

Classicists and the Romanticists was about to be decided in favor of the latter. Tragedy was at its last gasp; the theatre, so long the admired and envied model of all Europe, was tottering to its foundations under the load of debt which the indifference and neglect of a fickle public had allowed to accumulate upon it. The few actors of any talent who still lingered about the forsaken temple vainly sought to resist the torrent that bore them into the ranks of the exultant Romanticists; compelled to worship the false gods, they reluctantly apostatized from the creed of which they had once been the worthy champions. Nor should the impartial chronicler too hastily condemn these recreants; the performance of tragedies had become impossible from the lack of competent tragic actresses; the *débutantes* half converted to the new dogmas were no longer animated by the sacred fire; no extent of good-will could compensate the want of genius, of talent, of spirit; each new candidate for the scenic palm was the exact counterpart of her predecessor, reproducing before a wearied and disgusted public the same faulty style, the same ranting, whining, monotonous declamation; name succeeded name, and, passing unnoticed before a Parisian audience, sank, one after the other, into the same Lethean obscurity, the provinces entombing each at the close of her short and epitaphless career.

Alas! the abomination of desolation had fallen on the sanctuary. Imperious, despotic Romanticism had pronounced its *quos ego*, and the master-pieces of the French stage awaited in dust and forgetfulness an improbable resurrection. The announcement of "Cinna," "Andromaque," and "Merope" sufficed to transform the once-crowded house into a desert, and exhausted instead of replenishing the treasury.

With Talma, with Mademoiselle Duchesnois, true French tragedy had ended. We do not speak of Mademoiselle Georges, for she had forsaken her ethereal

mistress for one of the earth earthy: *Marion Delorme* could not be expected to become the chaste and heroic *Pauline*, nor could *La Tisbé* exchange the fanciful garb of the Venetian courtesan to assume with the Roman robes the Roman feelings of a *Junia*.

The Drama was triumphant; the Tragic Muse, still beautiful in her solitude and sadness, her rent and worn mantle ill concealing her poverty, her crown shivered, her proud throne mocked and defaced, her tears unseen, her sighs unheeded, in forsaken, still imperial majesty, the Great Relic of a Great Past, was preparing to flee forever from the ingrate land that now worshiped a usurper, when the hand of a child arrested her flight, and, for a brief space, restored her empire.

Three fourths of the following pages were written during the life of the celebrated woman whose career constitutes their subject. As the work drew to a close, the tomb opened to receive her who for eighteen years had been the pride of the French stage. But the event that has cast so deep a gloom over the prospects of classic art, depriving it of its sole support, can make no difference in a work in which neither posthumous flattery nor detraction find a place. Even the truth due to the dead should be spoken within certain limits. When the faults and errors of one who attained so high a rank as an *artiste* are trumpeted by the tongue of malice, or hinted at by the conscientious biographer, the reader must bear in mind the sphere in which she was born and passed her early youth, the intoxicating influence of unexpected fame and opulence, the bewildering effect of the sudden transition from the society of the low, the ignorant, and vulgar, to that of the most high-bred, educated, and aristocratic of the land, the satiety and weariness that the prompt fulfillment of every wish soon brought with it, the nervously irritable and constitutionally frail organization of the being who was constantly called upon to personify the most violent and wearing

passions; let us not then wonder that her aspirations toward the good and the beautiful were often followed by no results, that the creature so richly endowed by prodigal Nature, so powerfully sustained by Fortune, should not have been uniformly great, and that blemishes should have darkened her finest traits.

Yet, with all her imperfections, it will be long ere the world shall see another Rachel, the stage another *tragédienne* uniting her genius, her intuitive conception of the sublime and the beautiful, her extraordinary power of expressing what she so perfectly conceived, her grand pagan qualities, her Greek, statue-like figure, her majesty of brow and attitude, her quiet dignity of manner. The lovers of art have sustained an irreparable loss, and mournfully exclaim,

"There's a great spirit gone!"

We have followed Rachel more especially in her professional career, without, however, omitting the more arduous task of speaking of her as the woman in her social sphere: a delicate subject at all times, since it necessitates the invasion of the sanctuary of private life, revealing its mysteries to a prying public, but more especially so in the present case.

We have endeavored to fulfill this task so far as it was consistent with the duty of biography to record the words and actions of its subject. But there are grounds it is not our province to touch upon—grounds that are beyond the limits of even the morbid curiosity that eagerly seeks in every great work that issues from the Divine Hand the contaminating touch of the spirit of evil—grounds where the truth is too obscure to be distinguished from fiction, and where, even if known, it would afford no better clew to character, would convey no lesson, prevent no fall.

If, then, those who delight in the indiscriminate revelations of the foibles of poor human nature take up this book in the hope of meeting with a detailed account of

the *liaisons* attributed to the great *tragédienne*, we warn them that nothing so piquant seasons its matter-of-fact pages. Whatever could convey an idea of her character, temper, and inclinations, all that had any connection with her dramatic talent, we were bound to record; farther, we had nothing to add from the garrulous *chronique scandaleuse* of the day.

If tragedy did not die when disease laid so fatal a grasp on her last interpreter, at least she sank into so lethargic a sleep that the strenuous efforts made to arouse her have only proved their own futility and justified the triumphant pens of her adversaries. She who could revive the life, the soul, is herself gone forever. Well may we deplore the loss of the priestess who alone could rekindle the extinct flame, and exclaim,

"Si Pergama dextrà
Defendi possent, etiam hâc defensa fuissent."

# CONTENTS.


CHAPTER I.

Parentage.—Abraham Felix and Esther Haya.—Characteristics of the Father reflected in the Daughter.—Nomade Life.—Birth-place, early Childhood, and Pursuits..... Page 13

CHAPTER II.

1830–1837.

Paris.—A lucky Meeting.—Mr. Choron.—The Cours St. Aulaire.—Rachel at Thirteen.—Narrative of *Salema*.—An old Umbrella for Racine.—"Le Légataire Universel."—Precocious Actress.—The Conservatoire.—Conflicting Opinions.—A Judge at Fault.—Unfavorable Prognostics.—"Sell Bouquets, girl, sell Bouquets."—An important Rôle.—A great Step in Life..... 17

CHAPTER III.

1837.

The Gymnase.—La Vendéenne.—The first Criticism.—Jules Janin.—Bouffé.—An odd little Thing.—Jewish *Esprit de Corps*.—Rachel and Sanson..... 25

CHAPTER IV.

1838 and 1839.

The Théâtre Français.—Three Months of negative Success.—"Camille."—"Hermione."—"Emilie."—An unknown Admirer.—Doctor Véron.—Appearance of Rachel at that Time.—The Prince of Critics.—A less enthusiastic Admirer.—Agamemnon and Clytemnestra, Titus, and Bérénice, in brocade, flowing wigs, and small swords ... 32

CHAPTER V.

1838–1839.

Enthusiasm of the Public.—Louis Philippe and Rachel.—Royal Munificence in past and present Times.—An Increase of Salary.—System of Starring and its ill Effects.—*Monime*.—Behind the Curtains; La Rue Traversière.—A Step upward in private Life.—Peace broken between the *Sociétaires* and the Pet of the Public.—Bajazet; a critical Moment.—Reminiscences of Mademoiselle Mars.—Artistic Magnanimity and Vanity ..... 37

## CHAPTER VI.

1839.

A Step higher in private Life.—The maimed Student and a Scene in "Les Horaces." — The Friendship of the Great. — L'Abbaye aux Bois.—Madame Récamier.—The Jewish Actress and a Dignitary of the Church. — A Stranger to Venus. — Rachel in Comedy. — "Esther" ..... Page 49

## CHAPTER VII.

1840.

Artistic Career.—First Period one of constant Struggle and arduous Toil.—Eminent Critics of the Day.—Granier de Cassagnac.—Jules Janin.—Theophile Gauthier.—Edouard Thierry.—The Public becomes exacting.—Incident at a Soirée.—Rachel at Eighteen.—Taxed with want of real Feeling.—Tact.—Manners.—Delicate Health. —Solicitude of the Public ..... 57

## CHAPTER VIII.

1840.

Alarming Incident. — Three Plays revived this Year: "Nicomede," "Polyeucte," and "Marie Stuart."—Benefit of Mademoiselle Thénard at Versailles.—Why Racine is generally preferred to Corneille. —Mademoiselle Rachel as Pauline.—Commences her Tour through the Provinces. — Début at Rouen. — Letter to the Manager. — The Medallion of "my second Father."—Success at Lyons, &c., &c.— Reappearance at the Théâtre Français.—Indifference of the Public for the classical Drama.—Artistic Selfishness..... 67

## CHAPTER IX.

1841.

Engagement for one Year signed with the Théâtre Français.—Father and Teacher.—*Débûts* in England.—Victoria to Mademoiselle Rachel.—Andromaque mistaken for Hermione.—Rachel at Windsor.— Return to Paris.—Increasing Splendors.—Rachel a thorough Cosmopolitan.—A Rival!—Contest for the scenic Sceptre: "Marie Stuart."—Rachel and Elizabeth.—Maxime.—Phèdre keeping furnished Lodgings and a *Table d'hôte*..... 78

## CHAPTER X.

1842.

The "Cid."—The Chimène of the French Stage; the Ximena of ancient Spain and the Creation of Mademoiselle Rachel.—"Ariane." —La Champmeslé.—Mademoiselle Clairon.—Return to London.— Disappointment.—Success in Belgium.—30,000 Francs in eleven Nights.—Corneille's Anniversary a Failure.—Return to Paris.— "Frédégonde"..... 89

CHAPTER XI.

1843.

First Step in Life as a Free Woman.—A Portrait *au moral et au physique*.—Corroboratory Anecdotes.—Mademoiselle Aveuel.—The Cash-box.—The Fascination of Gold on different Minds.—Making Collections.—Expensive Fancies.—The Guitar..... Page 101

CHAPTER XII.

1843.

The Drama behind the Mask..... 117

CHAPTER XIII.

1843.

*Phèdre*: a first Attempt.—"Judith."—An unexpected *Débutante*.—Southern Enthusiasm.—A Deed of Charity.—*Débûts* of Raphael and Rebecca Felix in the "Cid"..... 122

CHAPTER XIV.

1844.

"Bérénice."—"Don Sanche d'Aragon."—"Catharine II."..... 130

CHAPTER XV.

1845.

Reconciliation with the Public.—Classicists and Romanticists.—"Virginie."—"Oreste"..... 137

CHAPTER XVI.

1846.

"Jeanne d'Arc."—Rachel in Holland.—The Théâtre Français a Land of Promise.—Dissensions with the Management.—A Soul of Fire in an Envelope of Gauze.—Mademoiselle Clairon and the Duke of Choiseul.—Rumored Conversion.—Cheap Proselytism.—Amenaïde without a Tancrède.—Death of Mademoiselle Mars.—Retirement of Joanny and Mademoiselle Georges..... 148

CHAPTER XVII.

1847.

"L'Ombre de Molière."—"Le Vieux de la Montagne."—"Athalie."—"Célimène."—"Cléopâtre"..... 156

CHAPTER XVIII.

1848.

Mademoiselle Rachel and Mademoiselle Georges.—"Cléopâtre and Rodogune."—Influence of Revolutions on Actors.—Talma and Lais.—Influence of the Revolution of 1848 on dramatic Literature and Theatricals.—Old Things new named.—M. de Lamartine's Rejection

of the Red Flag.—Suggestions of a Workman on Theatricals.—Béranger on the Revolution.—A political *Tragédienne*.—"La Marseillaise."—*Le Peuple* of Mademoiselle Rachel in 1844 and in 1848.. Page 171

CHAPTER XIX.

1848.

Decree of the Citizen Minister Ledru Rollin.—"Lucrèce."—Nemesis wearing the Insignia of a Commissaire de Police.—Grand National Performance.—The Blouse triumphant.—"Les Horaces."—"Le Malade Imaginaire."—"La Marseillaise."—Bouquet Monstre.—A Sovereign more despotic than the last.—Second grand national Performance.—Honorable Testimonial to Mademoiselle Rachel.—Enthusiasm at a low Ebb.—Grand Fêtes and no Bread.—Theatricals under Louis Philippe and under the Provisional Government.—Death of Vernet.—Mademoiselle Rachel in two Characters of the same Play ..... 183

CHAPTER XX.

1848.

Three Months in the South of France.—Rachel a licensed Propagandist.—Visit to Madame Lafargc.—A public Confession.—A hard-hearted Father.—Return to Paris.—Sketch of the Organization of the Théâtre Français.—The Priestess turns her back on the Temple.—A Visit of the Faculty.—An uncourteous Public..... 195

CHAPTER XXI.

1849.

A spoiled Child.—Proscription of "Cinna."—"Le Moineau de Lesbie."—The real Adrienne Lecouvreur.—Funeral Honors to theatrical Talent in France and in England in 1730.—The Adrienne Lecouvreur of Messrs. Scribe and Legouvé.—A characteristic Letter..... 204

CHAPTER XXII.

1849.

Benefit of Mademoiselle Georges.—The Thespian Car in 1650 and in 1849.—*Phèdre* without *Aricie*.—An Audience behind the Age.—A Tune to suit all Governments.—Life in a Stage-coach.—A promised Conversion.—A Play without an Audience.—The Théâtre Français *versus* Mademoiselle Rachel.—Mademoiselle Rachel *condemned* to sing the "Marseillaise".... ..... ..... ..... 218

CHAPTER XXIII.

1850.

*Resumé*.—"Mademoiselle de Belle-Isle."—"Angelo."—"Horace et Lydie."—*Congé* of four Months spent almost entirely in Germany.—The peasant Aunt.—Mother and Daughter..... .... 230

## CHAPTER XXIV.

1851.

State of Theatricals in 1851.—Despotic Influence of Stars and its baneful Results.—Dramatic Authors manufacturers to order.—"Valeria."—*Congé* of five Months and a half.—Italy.—Successor of Saint Peter and the Children of Israel.—Rebecca..... Page 239

## CHAPTER XXV.

1852.

"Diane."—"Louise de Lignerolles."—Invitation from the King of Prussia.—Severe Illness.—Homœopathic Doctor.—Appearance at the new Palace of Potsdam.—Presentation to the Empress of Russia.—The Czar Nicholas and Mademoiselle Rachel.—Return to Paris.—Prolongation of Life.—"Aspasie."—"Rosemonde"..... 249

## CHAPTER XXVI.

1853.

"Lady Tartuffe."—Short summer Excursion.—An obliging Manager.—Engagement in Russia.—Permission of the Emperor, the Minister of State, and the Comédie Français countersigned by M. Legouvé.—A diplomatic Letter.—The Author and the Actress.—Friendly Correspondence.—"Medée" asked for; "Medée" written; "Medée" read; "Medée" revised and corrected; "Medée" approved, received, rehearsed; "Medée" put away for another day.—Mademoiselle Rachel in St. Petersburg.—State of Theatricals in Russia.—A witty Reply..... 259

## CHAPTER XXVII.

1854.

Return from Russia.—Prudence *versus* Patriotism.—M. Legouvé loses Patience.—A Declaration of War before the Civil Tribunal.—Soft Words.—M. Legouvé appeased.—The Spoiled Pet and the Public.—Another Quarrel patched up.—Mademoiselle Rachel in the Classic *Repertoire* at the close of her Career.—"Phèdre."—"Camille."—A *Souvenir* of the Past..... 275

## CHAPTER XXVIII.

1854.

The first real Affliction.—Death of Rebecca Felix.—The Rosary.—The "Pardon."—Miss Smithson.—Mademoiselle Sontag.—A Warning.—A Letter from M. Legouvé.—Letters from Mademoiselle Rachel and her Secretary.—Mademoiselle Rachel condemned to play "Medée."—Mademoiselle Rachel doesn't play "Medée."—"Rosemonde."—Another Miscalculation..... 285

## CHAPTER XXIX.

1855.

"La Czarine."—Melpomene in Hysterics.—A formidable Rival.—Adelaïde Ristori, the Siddons of Italy.—"Francesca da Rimini."—"La Pia de Tolomei."—"Maria Stuarda" ..... Page 303

## CHAPTER XXX.

1855.

Departure for America.—Passion for Cards and Affection for her Brother.—An ill-advised Expedition.—Voyage across the Atlantic.—Unpleasant Prediction.—A sad Augury.—Our past Errors pursue us through Life.—A Stimulant to Learning.—Spontaneous Generosity.—"La Marseillaise" in the New World.—A slight Cold.—Boston.—Philadelphia ..... 319

## CHAPTER XXXI.

1856.

Return to New York.—Jules Janin in the Field again.—Philadelphia.—*Le Commencement de la Fin.*—Little family Jars.—Charleston.—The last Performance.—Maurice.—Havana ..... 333

## CHAPTER XXXII.

1856.

Meulan.—Hotel Rachel.—Household Gods put up at Auction.—Value set upon *Souvenirs.*—Ingenious Cicerones.—A Mother's Letter.—Dear-bought Absence.—Washington's Grandson.—A new Claim on the Théâtre Français.—Return from Egypt.—Sojourn in Montpellier.—Rachel's Children ..... 345

## CHAPTER XXXIII.

1857.

Concealment of Illness.—Bulletins of Health read on the Stage.—Molé.—Nicolet's Monkey-Actors.—Departure for Cannet.—Melancholy Pilgrimage.—Cannes.—Villa at Cannet.—The Dream.—Variations in Health and Spirits.—Farandoles.—Sister Sarah.—Raphael and the Cross.—Last Autograph.—Hebrew Prayer.—Death.—Funeral ..... 358

# MEMOIRS OF RACHEL.

## CHAPTER I.

Parentage.—Abraham Felix and Esther Haya.—Characteristics of the Father reflected in the Daughter.—Nomade Life.—Birth-place, early Childhood, and Pursuits..... Page 13

WHENEVER it happens that an individual of low birth and obscure origin springs into notoriety by the power of genius, aided by fortuitous circumstances, the anecdote-mongers and scandal-purveyors of an insatiate public stretch their inventive faculties to the utmost verge of probability, and even of possibility, in order to invest with all the hues of romance the infancy of the child of fame. Denuded of these fanciful additions, the mere facts would, in the majority of cases, possess but little interest; nine out of ten of those whose genius and talent illustrate the age in which they live, and stamp on the indelible page of history the name of their possessor, have had as uninteresting and prosaic a childhood as the host of their less gifted contemporaries. The interest we take in the early days of Rachel arises, not from her having been a street-singer—we daily meet those little itinerant warblers or screechers without bestowing a thought on their past, present, or future—but from her having subsequently attained pre-eminence in a far higher sphere. As for the thousand and one anecdotes that have been circulated of her former life, few are founded on reality, and, even if we grant them all to be deserving of credit, they are such as might find their counterpart in the lives of the common run of mortals.

The elements that afford an insight into the character, the feelings, the source of inspiration, the *modus operandi* of the mind—these are the points that interest the judicious observer, these are the really valuable traits which we would record. Pruning the surcharged history of our heroine of all incidents

not well authenticated, we still find sufficient to corroborate our estimate of this very singular and exceptional character, and in her parentage and the circumstances that developed her talents, a clew to much that otherwise would appear unexplainable.

The Felix family is of German-Rhenish origin, though Rachel's father, a Frenchman, was born in Metz. Abraham Felix studied in his youth with the object of becoming a rabbi, but subsequently forsook sacred lore for an avocation suggested by necessity, and became a traveling peddler. A man of a rather superior order of intellect, considering his position in society, and the few opportunities afforded him for its development, of sound judgment and strong mind, he has nevertheless been accused of displaying in his manners the vanity and self-sufficiency of the parvenu, and of being another instance of the fact that, whenever pecuniary interests are in question, the Jew blood is instantly on the alert, and justice and reason are unceremoniously sacrificed to the love of gain. He may be described as one of those men who, slow and methodical to a fault, and usually governed by good sense, are yet apt to give way to moments of anger, the fury of which is so ungovernable as to terrify the members of their households into a state of mute submission until the storm subsides—men who contradict, irritate, and worry the weak who are in their power, and, in so doing, lash themselves into the most unreasonable rages. This, however, in the case of Rachel's father, happened but seldom; for, though severe, he was generally strictly just. Whatever might be the pride he felt in his daughter, he never joined with her mother, brother, and sisters in their silly and exaggerated encomiums of her talent. He never hesitated to blame openly what he did not approve, and his praise was the more valuable from the caution with which it was bestowed. His taste and instinctive knowledge of dramatic art would have done honor to a veteran stager, and to his judicious advice Rachel was perhaps indebted for much of her success. Indeed, she inherited from him so many of the most striking points of her character, that some knowledge of the father's is necessary to gain a clew to the daughter's.

Of Rachel's mother, Esther Haya Felix, it may be sufficient

to say that she was a sensible, kind-hearted, and intelligent woman, who, though idolizing her children, never permitted the slightest disregard of her maternal authority. And one of the peculiar characteristics of this family—a characteristic especially rare in the present age of progress, when children are wiser than their fathers, and consign respect to age among the rubbish of a by-gone time—is the unbounded reverence with which, whatever the success that has attended their career, the younger members appear to have always regarded its heads. There is something very beautiful, and of a Biblical character, in the intercourse between the parents and the children, which reminds one of scenes in the lives of the patriarchs.

But with these higher and finer traits—these bright dashes on the canvas of this Israelite tableau — are intermingled meaner and baser ones, the foul blotches inseparable from the race, and conspicuous wherever there is a drop of the blood—sordid littleness, petty vanity, and inordinate love of show. Though at heart a good woman, Madame Felix has been accused of carrying to a greater length than even her husband the parvenu characteristics, and to have been too apt in matters of business to bring to her aid all the sharp, grasping, covetous nature of him who so artfully acquired his brother's birthright. In this particular, however else they may differ, the whole family have shown but too close a similarity.

But while the littleness and foibles of the Felix family are, as we have already said, distinctive attributes of their race, it must be owned that their great and good qualities are no less its appanage. Fortitude in adversity, perseverance in the pursuit of an object, religious reverence for family ties, and the *esprit de corps* that has sustained that race and maintained its existence through long centuries and amid antagonistic nations, have endowed this scattered remnant of a once mighty people with the strength which they lack numerically, and enabled them to maintain their long-disputed footing amid the peoples of Europe. These qualities are found unalloyed in the Felix family.

The marriage between the parents of Rachel was one of mutual affection; but the course of true love did not run smoother in their case than it does in the generality of in-

stances, the elders long withholding their consent. At the end of two years the perseverance of the lovers triumphed, and they were united. A numerous progeny was for a long time the only wealth of this constant couple. Born during the course of their mother's peregrinations, each child was the native of a different place. Several died in early childhood, and six reached adultness. Of these, Sarah, Raphael, Leah, and Dinah still live; Rebecca died three years ago; and of the death of Rachel we shall have hereafter to make more particular mention. These Biblical names proclaiming too plainly the race of the bearers, they were laid aside, and more commonplace ones substituted. Sarah and Raphael alone kept theirs; the other children were known as Eliza, Rosalie, Charlotte, and Emilia. When they subsequently came before the public, however, the prestige attached to uncommon names induced them to resume their original ones. On the day of her *début* Eliza appeared as Rachel, Rosalie afterward came out as Rebecca, Charlotte was Leah, and Emilia Dinah. Even Madame Felix, who had Christianized herself so far as adopting the name of Sophia went, took the more euphonious one of Noemi.

Fortune long frowned on the Felix family. Pursuing from town to village, and from fair to fair, their precarious and toilsome career, earning with difficulty their uncertain daily bread, the parents, like the majority of itinerant Jews, carried on a variety of avocations, but had no regular trade or profession.

Sarah, the eldest child, was born in Germany, and in the very heart of the Jewish customs and traditions. Of all the family, she is the most thorough Hebrew at heart.

Raphael was born in Macon, Rebecca in Lyons, and Dinah in Paris.

It was in a little wretched inn in Munf (Canton of Aran, Switzerland), on the 24th of March, 1821, according to the best authenticated account, that the wife of the poor peddler gave birth to the child who was to be the source of wealth and prosperity to the whole family. We have given this place of birth, as we have said, from the best authenticated accounts; for, in reality, nothing can be found to designate with certainty the exact spot. All that remains to record the event, so

unimportant to the world at that time, is an entry made by the burgomaster of Aran, mentioning that the wife of a peddler had been confined of a female child in the village of Munf. The entry bore no mention of family or religion. The birth was regularly recorded on no civil or religious register whatsoever.

Thus the great *tragédienne* of our age, she whose renown has been proclaimed in all Europe and confirmed in the New World, can not boast of that which is the patrimony of the humblest and poorest child of the people—an act that proves her identity!

For ten successive yēars the family wandered throughout Switzerland and Germany, and during the course of this wearisome pilgrimage, the energy and perseverance with which the mother sought to conquer adverse fate were indefatigable. She finally succeeded in housing her numerous progeny in Lyons, where she opened a paltry little second-hand clothes shop.

While patient Esther bought and sold old clothes, her husband gave lessons in German. Sarah, the eldest child, went from one café to another singing, accompanied by her younger sister, Rachel, who collected the copper donations, and the children not unfrequently trundled between them, on a barrow, a third child, thus adding to the interest they excited, and relieving their mother of the care of the baby for a short time.

---

## CHAPTER II.

1830 to 1837.

Paris.—A lucky Meeting.—Mr. Choron.—The Cours St. Aulaire.—Rachel at Thirteen.—Narrative of *Salema*.—An old Umbrella for Racine.—"Le Légataire Universel."—Precocious Actress.—The Conservatoire.—Conflicting Opinions.—A Judge at Fault.—Unfavorable Prognostics.—"Sell Bouquets, girl, sell Bouquets."—An important Rôle.—A great Step in Life..... 17

Toward the year 1830 the Felix family found means to satisfy the craving desire that all provincials entertain to see the capital. They removed to Paris, and for some years continued there the life they led in Lyons.

Many and contradictory versions have been given of the circumstances that led to the cultivation and development of the tragic genius whose latent spark might, under less propitious ones, have been stifled at its birth. The following we can vouch for as having been the real origin of Rachel's fortunate career.

A gentleman of the name of Morin, who, at the present day, is employed in a government office, was one evening taking his cup of coffee in a café, Rue de la Huchette, one of the poorest, lowest, and meanest streets of a very poor, low, and mean quarter of the town. Sarah was singing, and Rachel was going the rounds of the tables, collecting contributions from the guests. Struck with the exceeding sweetness of the elder girl's voice—a voice possessing in an extraordinary degree the power of awakening a sympathetic chord in the heart of the listener—Mr. Morin called the singer to him, and inquired why she did not find a way to make her voice more profitable than it was with her present mode of using it—a practice which, moreover, exposed her to numerous insults, and might result in her finally losing it.

The girl replied that she had no one to take an interest in or to counsel her how to act.

"Well," said the gentleman, "here is my address; come to me to-morrow, and I will give you a letter to a friend of mine who may be of great service to you."

The girls went the next day to their new protector, who, true to his word, gave them a letter to Mr. Choron, then at the head of the Conservatoire of Sacred Music, Rue Vangirad, 69. Choron heard Sarah sing, and immediately admitted her as a pupil. Then turning to Rachel, he said,

"And what can you do, little one?"

"I can recite verses," was the reply.

"Recite verses, can you? Pray let me hear you."

The child complied, and the correctness and feeling with which she uttered the pieces of her little repertory were deemed remarkable by this competent judge, albeit the effect of the recitation was somewhat marred by the gruff tones of the voice. Both sisters were admitted into the Conservatoire, Rachel taking a place among the choristers.

By the advice of Mr. Choron, Rachel studied elocution, and was recommended by him to St. Aulaire, the manager of the Salle Génard, Rue de Lancry, where pupils were taught gratuitously. Her sister Sarah also followed the Cours there. The talent innate in the younger sister must have been very apparent, for, unlike Sarah's, her voice was peculiarly grating and disagreeable in early youth, and for a long while seemed destined to prove an insuperable obstacle to success.

Nor was the exterior of the aspirant after histrionic laurels an auxiliary. Puny, meagre, wiry, she appeared several years younger than she really was. The person from whom these particulars were obtained, and who, for years, never lost sight of the fortunate Jewess, gives a graphic description of her as she then appeared. It was in 1834, on a cold, gray November morning, Rachel was dressed in a short calico frock, the pattern of which was the common one of a red ground spotted with white; the trowsers were of the same material; the boots of coarse black leather, laced in front, but scrupulously polished. Her hair was parted at the back of the head, and hung down her shoulders in two braids. Every thing about the child was of the cheapest and plainest kind, but the *ensemble* conveyed an idea of excessive neatness and even precision—characteristics for which she was always noted. With those older than herself little Rachel was punctiliously polite, and this manner proceeded more from intuitive knowledge of the propriety of such conduct than from lessons received. She was simple and grave beyond her years; every feature of the long, childish face bearing an impress of modesty and even dignity, with which education had had little to do. With children of her own age she was pert, bold, and capricious, resembling rather a fantastic, tricky elf than the serious, formal little dame she appeared in older society.

The Cours was removed from the Rue Lancry, and established momentarily in the Prado, opposite the Palais de Justice. It was here that Rachel's natural genius for tragedy was in reality first revealed. She recited the narrative of *Salema*, in the "Abufar," by Ducis, describing the agony of the mother who, while expiring of thirst in a desert, gives birth to her babe. While uttering the thrilling tale, the thin face

seemed to lengthen with horror, the small, deep-set black eyes dilated with a fixed stare, as though she witnessed the harrowing scene, and the deep guttural tones, despite a slight Jewish accent, awoke a nameless terror in the hearer, carrying him through the imaginary woe with a strange feeling of reality, not to be shaken off as long as the sounds lasted. To elicit thus the sympathetic attention of those who heard her was much, but yet more was needed to satisfy a public rendered fastidious by the remembrance of past excellence, and the constant habit of seeing new candidates for its favors. The voice might be tolerated, as time was expected to smooth its discordant notes; but the public eye must also be satisfied; and, until she attained nearly her full growth, Rachel's figure, all acute angles, resembled that of a half-starved monkey.

The school was finally removed to the Salle Molière in April, 1835, and here the system of teaching was somewhat changed. Theatricals were got up in which the pupils were the actors, each paying from one to ten francs for the privilege, according to the importance of the part undertaken. Sarah, who was supposed to be an especial favorite with the head of the academy, had her own way in all things, and the result was that her sister played any and every thing without paying. In fact, she learned indiscriminately any part that happened to be wanted, from one of the mutes that fill up the background to the most important personages in tragedy or comedy, without any reference to her peculiar disposition or aptness for any one branch of her art—points utterly unheeded by the teacher at the time. This indifference seemed justified by the insignificant appearance she then presented. Time seemed to pass over without noticing the scraggy little elf, who, at fourteen, hardly looked to be nine. During three years she did not grow a line.

The following account of the first introduction of a well-known *feuilletonist* to the *tragédienne* in embryo we borrow from the *Independence Belge*. Speaking of the little theatre where St. Aulaire taught his pupils to appear with ease and confidence before an audience, Mr. Villemot says:

"It was here that, in 1835, I saw for the first time her who was to win such celebrity. One of my friends, a young man

of good family, and who now occupies the post of French Consul abroad, was possessed with a passion for private theatricals. All his leisure hours and all his spare money he spent in this darling pursuit, and I was one day invited with great solemnity to witness his performance of the part of *Danville* in the '*Ecole des Vieillards.*' When we entered the theatre, my friend stopped before a column on which was a smoky lamp, and against which was leaning a meagre, black, scraggy, poverty-stricken little girl, of an aspect more wretched than I can describe. 'Eliza,' quoth the amateur comedian to this child, 'which would you rather have, a cake or fried potatoes?' 'Fried potatoes,' was the reply.

"My friend, who, in playing great characters, had acquired habits of reckless prodigality, drew from his pocket a two-sous piece. Seized with a spirit of emulation, I bestowed a similar coin. The child disappeared, and returned almost immediately bearing a paper horn full of fried potatoes, temptingly hot and brown. She offered the horn to her benefactors, and this was the only time I ever partook of a meal with Mademoiselle Rachel. Young Eliza was to appear in an after-piece—I do not know what one, or in what part. I did not see her: my friend had made such poor work of the part of Danville, I had had quite enough of it. Going home, I inquired of my friend who was that miserable little thing. 'That,' said he, 'is a very intelligent but very poor child, as you see. You, who are acquainted with authors and managers, might perhaps get her employment in some theatre to play childish parts; you would thus do her a great favor.'

"But people are not apt to interest themselves in meagre, dark, wretched-looking children, even when they are gifted with intelligence, and the amateur's recommendation was not in the present case more successful than such efforts usually are. When Rachel was no longer in need of assistance, it would have been joyfully proffered."

Rachel thus continued to spend, or rather to waste her time, playing once a week, until the year 1836. About this epoch, Mr. de St. Aulaire, who rather liked his little pupil, introduced her to some of the actors of the different theatres, who now and then came to witness the performances of these embryo

actresses. Among these visitors was Monval, an actor of the Gymnase, of mediocre ability as an actor, but of deserved reputation as stage manager of that theatre. Monval was among those who took note of the peculiar excellence of little Rachel's style of acting—an excellence unfortunately cast into the shade by the too apparent disadvantages of her form.

On the 20th of March of that year the Conservatoire de Musique re-opened its classes of declamation, and Sanson, Michelot, and Provost were appointed professors. Many of St. Aulaire's pupils deserted him for the Conservatoire, and Rachel was advised to do the same. Ties of gratitude, however, bound the little Jewess to the professor who had been so kind to her, and she could not decently leave him for the more favored institution that had eclipsed his. At the end of three or four months nearly all the pupils of the Salle Molière had left, seduced not only by the rumor of the brilliancy of style acquired at the Conservatoire, but by a still more potent consideration—at the public institution, no expense was incurred by the pupils; at St. Aulaire's, a monthly sum of two francs was paid by each toward defraying the expenses of the rooms. However small this sum may seem, it was one of importance to many of the contributors. As Rachel, however, paid nothing, this consideration could not influence her and counterbalance gratitude; how far the latter feeling would have conquered had the case been otherwise, it is hard to say.

An incident related by herself proves both how strong was the vocation of the child and how poor were her circumstances at the time. She owned an old volume of Racine, and longed to become the fortunate possessor of another.

She had seen just the book she coveted in one of the collections of old books displayed for sale on the quays, but the franc needed for the purchase was a sum far beyond her means. The temptation at last overpowered all other considerations; she went to a dealer in second-hand articles, sold him an old umbrella, with which she went back, and forth to the Cours, and bought the volume with the twenty sous she had thus obtained. At home she accounted for the umbrella by saying she had lost it.

One Sunday, Sanson, then at the height of his reputation,

came to St. Aulaire's to see one of his pupils act *Lisette* in the "Legataire Universel," a play in which there is an incidental part. In the second act, old Géroute, who intends committing matrimony, receives a call from his apothecary, a fiery little bantam, married to a second wife, and who, having had a family of fourteen children by the first spouse, confidently hopes that the second may prove as prolific. He calls for the purpose of entering a violent protest against his customer's connubial intentions, and, after an explosion of wrath, goes off in a fury, prognosticating all the ills imaginable to the doomed patient. This part is generally played by a child; but, though the size of the personage is thus represented, the *rôle* loses sadly in other respects. On this occasion it fell to Rachel, whose figure it exactly suited, her very defects proving serviceable qualities in this instance. Here, too, her sharp, rough tones, her naturally tragic delivery, her energetic bursts of fury, enabled her to do ample justice to the part, and elicited much applause. Sanson warmly urged her to join the Cours of the Conservatoire, and interest and ambition predominating over gratitude, she took the advice of her new acquaintance. Having passed her examination, she was admitted, notwithstanding her dwarf figure.

She reaped little advantage from the change of quarters. She attracted little notice from the professors, her voice militating greatly against her, while her size seemed to condemn her to inaction. Michelot pronounced that her voice might eventually render her suited for tragic parts, but that her size would be an objection. Provost averred that her slender proportions might enable her to play the *Soubrettes* of comedy, but that her voice totally precluded her so doing. Notwithstanding this, he caused her to learn Lisette in the "Folies Amoureuses" by Regnard. Sanson refrained from expressing his opinion. On the following Saturday Provost heard her repeat her part, and, according to custom, was exceedingly harsh and violent with her. This was, in fact, his manner with all his pupils. He entered so completely into the spirit of the part, that he did not pause to consider that all were not imbued with his conception of it, and, in consequence of this arbitrary view, any deviation was visited with merciless

severity. Rachel was snubbed, scolded, and browbeaten like the rest, with the additional comment that *she had the voice of a costermonger.* "Go, child, go sell bouquets; that's all you will ever be fit for," was the comforting finale of the professor's lecture.

Some months after this stormy lesson, the derided pupil had an opportunity to remind the false prophet of his disheartening predictions. She had played "Hermione" to an enthusiastic public, and been greeted with a shower of bouquets. When the curtain fell, gathering her trophies in the skirt of her Grecian tunic, she approached Provost, who was behind the scenes, and, kneeling with mock humility, said,

"Sir, you once advised me to sell bouquets; will you now be my first customer?"

Provost gracefully admitted his error, adding that none could rejoice more sincerely than himself in the falseness of his prophecy.

But that day of triumph was still distant, and in the mean while the poor girl, who was even at that age obliged to have her tonsils cut, retired heart-stricken and despairing. This scene took place in the beginning of the year 1837, at which time the pupils were rehearsing "Tartuffe." To Rachel fell the part of *Flipotte!* That, after ten years of study, she should only be deemed worthy to receive, with speechless resignation, the box on the ear from the irascible Madame Pernelle, was an insult too great to be tolerated, and the hitherto patient and docile girl forsook the Conservatoire, and sought the advice of her old friend St. Aulaire, whom she begged to procure her employment in some theatre where she could earn a trifle. St. Aulaire spoke on the subject to Monval, who, having heard her, recommended her to his manager, Mr. Poirson. Mr. Poirson liked singular and eccentric persons, and, hearing that the girl was a very odd little thing, engaged her at the—to her—very high salary of 3000 francs for three years. Her abilities having been gauged, a piece in two acts, called "La Vendéenne," was written by Paul Duport for her *début.*

## CHAPTER III.

1837.

The Gymnase.—La Vendéenne.—The first Criticism.—Jules Janin.—Bouffé.—An odd little Thing.—Jewish *Esprit de Corps*.—Rachel and Sanson..... 25

Thus she who probably even then aspired to tread the classical highway to the Temple of Fame, set out by turning her back on the Greek and Roman Deities to enter the narrow lane of the Vaudeville drama. However, it was still a beginning, and, in her situation, an unhoped-for piece of good luck. Of this *début*, which took place on the 24th of April, 1837, a dramatic author of some reputation, Mr. G. Rurat de Gurgy, condescended to give the following notice:

"Mademoiselle Rachel Felix, who is quite a young person, will, in the course of time, prove herself possessed of one of the finest dramatic organizations we have yet seen. Her voice is grave and penetrating, and in moments of passion its tones soften and seem full of tears. The success of Mademoiselle Felix has exceeded, if possible, that of the "Vendéenne," which had been so arranged as to give full scope to the precocious powers of the *débutante*. She was recalled and applauded several times. The Theatre of the Gymnase will renew with this young actress the bright days of Mademoiselle Léontine Fry. The continuation of Mademoiselle Rachel's *débûts* has not ceased to be happy, and we are more than ever disposed to believe in the fair horoscope that is drawn for her by all who witness her performances. Good plays make the reputation of actresses, and good actresses insure success to plays."

The above opinion could not, *certes*, at the time it was written, be accused of partiality, or of having emanated from party feeling. It was as sincere as it was just, and its favorable prognostics have since been fulfilled.

Though the groundwork of the drama of "La Vendéenne," and its most pathetic scenes, are openly borrowed from the

well-known novel of the "Heart of Mid-Lothian," it possessed all the interest of a new story. The poor girl who, alone, unprotected, sustained only by her affection, travels from a distant province up to court to implore mercy for a sister or a father, as the case may be, must necessarily prove interesting. The plot is very simple. General Fresnault is sent to pacify "La Vendée." The general, though kind-hearted, and desirous of sparing the Vendéens, is devoted heart and soul to the First Consul, and is a strict disciplinarian. On one occasion an order is dispatched from the court for the arrest and delivery to a court-martial of a certain Vendéen peasant of the name of Thibault. The order is brought by a young and elegant captain, an *aid-de-camp* of General Bonaparte, a cousin of Josephine's, a sort of pet at the Malmaison. When Victor delivers his fatal missive there is in the room a young girl, into whose heart the tidings strike despair, for Thibault is her father. The paroxysm of grief of the fair Geneviève moves the gay young officer to disregard even a peremptory duty; come what will, she shall have time to implore mercy for her father. To afford her this time he has but one resource—he throws the order in the fire.

From the Vendéenne's cottage, where the first act passes, the second carries us into the gardens of the Malmaison, where we find the lovely and gentle mistress also a prey to anxiety for the safety of him she loves. George Cadoudal has been again busy, and a plan had very recently been laid, and well-nigh carried into execution, for the seizure and sending captive into England of the First Consul. The discovery of this plot has exasperated its proposed victim. The time is ill chosen for the petition of Victor's *protegée*. He himself has just arrived, and obtained an audience of Josephine. His cousin reproaches him for his imprudence. "Good heavens! he has destroyed one of Bonaparte's dispatches; he has saved one of George Cadoudal's friends. You have deserved death, young madman. You will certainly be shot. Fly! Victor, fly!"

Alas! the advice of the compassionate Josephine comes too late, for the imprudent captain is then and there arrested.

In the mean while, little Geneviève arrives at the chateau. She has walked a long way; she is weary and foot-sore, and,

now that she has reached the goal, every thing fails her at once—her protector, Victor, hope, courage. The child, thus left to her own resources, sinks, faint and despairing, in a corner of the empress's *salon*. We may well say the empress now, for on this very day the First Consul has resolved to exchange the life-consulship for a royal, imperial, hereditary, and perpetual majesty. While Josephine, thus raised to the height of honors, gives vent to her exultation, she hears the broken sobs of the disconsolate child. The empress turns her head, and Geneviève is at her feet. Here begins the scene on which hangs the fate of the chief *dramatis personæ*, that of the play itself, and the success of the *débutante*. The *finale* is easily guessed. The emperor inaugurates his reign by an act of clemency. So fair a day must be darkened by no cloud—the captain and the Vendéen chief are forgiven.

The young actress had dressed the piece with strict attention; the garb was the coarse one of the Vendéenne peasant-girl, and certainly not calculated to conceal defects or set off beauty in the wearer, yet the illusion was complete. There were two stanzas in her part, which, instead of singing, she *chanted*, with the strangely moving intonations, the *melopœia* which ten years later were to prove so effective in the "Marseillaise," on the boards of the Théâtre Français. It was evident that hers was no voice for singing, yet she threw such feeling into the stanzas that it compensated the lack of vocal powers. The following verse was the most applauded:

"Je croquais encore l' invoquer;
Vers moi soudain elle s' avance,
Et du doigt semble m' indiquer
Une ville inconnue immense,
Un seul mot rompit le silence
'Paris!' et puis elle ajouta,
Comme en réponse à ma prière,
'Vas y seule à pied—car c'est là
Que tu pourras sauver ton père.'"

At the rehearsal, Bouffé, who was present, was much struck with the singular mixture of strange qualities the *débutante* presented—a union of the sublime and the grotesque—a casket, rough-hewn and unpolished, through which gleamed a priceless gem. An undefined sense of something grand

lurking beneath that unpropitiating exterior pervaded the minds of the spectators, who almost refrained from expressing an admiration they could not satisfactorily explain to themselves. Bouffé had never heard of her, and the *big* voice, the scraggy figure, the unaffected, simple intonation, the calm, quiet dignity, beneath which lay an extraordinary depth of passion, impressed him strangely.

"What an odd little girl!" said he; "there is something in her, *certes*, but her place is not here."

A far more important critic than the preceding one also gave his opinion of the play and of the actress. The *feuilleton* of the *Débats* of May 1st, 1837, contained the following:

"The little drama ('La Vendéenne') is simply but clearly written. The empire and La Vendée, the republic and the monarchy, all parties and all persons, are handled with such tact as to give offense to none, and numerous stumbling-blocks nicely avoided. But the production of a drama was not the sole object the author had in view; the success of his heroine was to entail the success of a new-comer on the stage, a child of scarcely fifteen summers, of the name of Rachel. This child, thank Heaven, is not a phenomenon, and will never be cried up as a wonder. Rachel has soul, heart, intellect, and very little skill. She possesses an intuitive perception of the feeling she is to express, and her intellect suffices to understand it. She needs lessons and advice from no one. In her acting there is no effort, no exaggeration; she utters no screams, makes no gestures; there is nothing like coquetry in her countenance or manners; on the contrary, there is something abrupt, bold, and savage in the attitude, walk, and look —such is Rachel. This child, whose instinct tells her what is truth in art, dresses with scrupulous attention to local costumes; her voice is harsh and untutored like that of a child; her hands are red like those of a child; her foot, like her hand, is scarcely shaped yet; she is not pretty, yet she pleases; in a word, there is a great future in this young talent, and for the present she excites tears, emotion, and interest."

The above judgment is curious, inasmuch as, though on the whole very favorable to Rachel, it contains a sentence wholly and positively contradicted by the writer himself with-

in a twelvemonth after, namely, that Rachel was *not a phenomenon, and would never be cried up as a wonder.* The *Constitutionnel* of May 1st, also, though less favorable to the play, was quite as much so to the precocious talent of the actress. Beyond a few words of praise in the *Débats* of May 22d, no farther notice was taken of the *débutante* for many months. Her very existence seemed forgotten by the press.

The Jewish *esprit de corps* shone conspicuously on the occasion of the *début* of a co-religionist. Her father's traffic, station, and circumstances threw him altogether into one class of his people, and that class, by no means the highest, came forth *en masse* to sustain the *neophyte.* The *gods* were on that occasion all Jews. All the cheap seats were crammed with the chosen people. The "Vendéenne" was acted sixty times in succession, but the treasury was not much benefited by the influx of Israelites, as the galleries and pit alone were filled. The vanity of the Felix family was, however, amply gratified, for these numerous supporters tributed applause, which, if not always very judicious, was loud, lusty, and prolonged *ad infinitum.*

Notwithstanding this apparent success, Rachel was found by the manager a more difficult commodity to dispose of than he had imagined. His was not the stage for her peculiar style. Scribe's little comedies, with their prettiness and littleness, were totally unsuited to the manner of young Rachel —a manner simple, serious, verging already on the sublime; and the voice was utterly at variance with the pert, roguish manner of the *soubrette.* Finally, he intrusted her with the *rôle* of *Susanne,* in the "Marriage de Raison"—a *rôle* created by Léontine Fay, afterward Madame Volnys, who was then at the Théâtre Français. Rachel, anxious to improve, went to Madame Volnys, and begged she would give her the benefit of her advice in learning a part in which she herself had obtained such eminent success. Madame Volnys kindly complied, but her tutoring did no good to Rachel, whose sterling and original talent could not bend to adopt the empty, rapid style of Léontine. She made her second *début* in this part on the 18th of June. The success obtained continued to be a negative one, and the cheap seats to be invaded by the descendants of Jacob.

By this time it had become evident to all that the national tragic arena was the only one where the powers of Rachel could find scope for full development. She was now sixteen, and, as though Nature had awaited the hour of her *début* to join with Fortune in showering favors on their gifted child, within a few months of that auspicious era in her life the dwarfish figure had—we will not say *grown*, for the word scarce gives an idea of the change—elongated several inches! She applied to her former professor, Sanson, who procured her an engagement at the Théâtre Français, for the first tragic parts, at a salary of 4000 francs per year. Mr. Poirson, convinced of her unfitness for his stage, kindly canceled her engagement with him.

From that day forth Sanson took great interest in Rachel, and labored diligently to impart to her the qualities for which he was eminent—clearness and simplicity of style, purity of diction. He revealed her powers to the diligent pupil, and opened a new sphere to her soaring spirit. The following anecdote, told by one who had it from the lips of his pupil, proves that Sanson saw the germ of the bright future that was in store for her. Before her engagement at the Théâtre Français, of which she was destined to prove the restorer and chief stay, he gave her two seats for some performance he was anxious she should witness. Overjoyed at the prospect of the treat, the girl donned her best apparel—her best was not very brilliant—and was at the doors with her mother at an early hour. Looking disdainfully at the mean bonnets, coarse plaid shawls, and clogs, that were to be inducted into the best and most conspicuous places in the house,

"Here," quoth the ticket-taker, "you're not fit to be seen in those seats: take these; they are quite good enough."

Rachel was inclined to throw back the tickets thus unceremoniously exchanged for hers, but the wish to see the play triumphed over pride, and she accepted the back seats at the top of the house.

When Sanson heard of the disrespect shown to his pupil, he was exceedingly angry with the *controlleur*.

"The little girl you have treated so rudely," said he, "will one day have influence enough to dispose of your place at her

will; she will one day give the law in the house you would have turned her out of."

Indeed, so much did Rachel profit by the untiring lessons of this excellent teacher, that her detractors have thence taken occasion to say that without him she would never have attained her high eminence in art. They have asserted that Rachel was, after all, but an echo of her professors—a clear, sonorous, magnificent echo certainly, but still only an echo.

It would be absurd to assert that the splendid terrors of that queenly brow, the impassioned accents of those eloquent lips, now full of piercing irony, now quivering with suppressed rage, are due to mechanical precision, to careful imitation. No, the deniers of her genius dare not go so far; they allow that she understands the scope and design of that which she so readily executes, but they will not allow that her conception is innate. They explain her extraordinary performance by her wonderful memory, and insist that she is entirely indebted to her power of retaining and classifying in systematic order the different *effects* that have been pointed out to her, using them with accurate precision just where they are required. To use the words of one of these *iconoclasts*, she should be regarded only as an instrument, but an instrument gifted with a soul, which, in the absence of the skillful hand that draws forth its sweetness, re-echoes the harmonious note that hand had once awakened. They averred that, alone and unaided, she was wholly destitute of creative power, and like a diamond lost in the darkness, that awaits a foreign light to throw forth its own rays. The most incredulous of these skeptics allowed, however, that she possessed a wonderful organization of the larynx, and attributed to it the transcendent effects she produced. In proof of this incapacity to create, they alleged that every new part she appeared in had been carefully, indefatigably conned over with Sanson, line by line, word by word, from the first to the last verse; every attitude, gesture, and intonation studied, weighed, and regulated, the hand of art guiding this fine but nearly blind intelligence.

All this may in a measure be true; but that Rachel had immense native genius is no less so; and the fact that art had to be called in to guide and maintain it in the true road, that

the lessons of wisdom and experience were needed to curb its erratic propensities within the bounds of nature, does not at all gainsay its existence. Were her success entirely attributable to her professor, she would not stand alone on the height to which she has risen, for very many indeed have been pupils of the same master, and among them we discern but one Rachel.

---

## CHAPTER IV.

### THE DÉBUTS OF MADEMOISELLE RACHEL IN ALL HER CLASSICAL RÔLES.

1838 and 1839.

The Théâtre Français.—Three Months of negative Success.—"Camille."—"Hermione."—"Emilie."—An unknown Admirer.—Doctor Véron.—Appearance of Rachel at that Time.—The Prince of Critics.—A less enthusiastic Admirer.—Agamemnon and Clytemnestra, Titus, and Bérénice, in brocade, flowing wigs, and small swords ... 32

THE first appearance of Rachel on the classic boards of the Théâtre Français was in the part of *Camille*, on the 12th of June, 1838. The heat was excessive; all town was out of town; the boxes were empty; the pit and galleries, as usual, filled with Jews, who had, in behalf of Rachel, made the theatre their place of rendezvous. Her success with that audience was complete, although surpassed by that which Joanny, who played old *Horace*, obtained. Her second *début* was in the *Emilie* of "Cinna," on the 16th; the third in the *Hermione* of "Andromaque," on the 9th of July. When she uttered the ironical passage of the fourth act, beginning

"Seigneur, dans cette aveu dépourvu d'artifice," &c.,

the applause was immense, though still tributed by the pit and galleries only. The receipts of the house suffice to show its emptiness: on the first night that Rachel played in the "Horaces," that is, on the night of her first *début*, the amount taken was 753.05 francs; "Cinna" brought 558.80 francs; "Andromaque," 373.20 francs. And yet, within five months from that time, on the sixth occasion that she played "Camille," on the 10th of November of the same year, the receipts amounted to 6124 francs 25 centimes!

In this dearth of competent judges that attended the advent

of her who was to insure a brilliant though transitory resurrection to the muse of classical tragedy, we must record one exception—an exception that was not without its influence. This was Doctor Véron, the self-elected Mæcenas of the young French *litterateurs*. We will give, in the doctor's own words, the impression then made on his very sensitive and enthusiastic organization by her who was predestined to make so deep a one on his heart. The commencement is in the approved style of romance.

"On a fine summer evening—June 12th, 1838—in my search after shade and solitude—shade and solitude may be found even in Paris by him who seeketh diligently—I entered the Théâtre Français. It was about eight o'clock, and I constituted the fifth person in the orchestra seats. My attention was drawn to the stage by a strange and exceedingly expressive countenance, a prominent brow, a dark eye, deep set and full of fire; this head was set on a figure which, though thin, was not devoid of a certain elegance of attitude, motion, and gesture. A voice clear, sympathetic, finely toned, and, above all, cleverly managed, roused my mind, which at that moment was more inclined to indolence than to admiration." With the exception of the eyes, which are not at all "full of fire," but, on the contrary, resemble two dead-black spots of ink under the cavernous brows, the doctor, diving into the depths of his memory, then recalls a confused vision of that singular countenance, seen in the rôle of "La Vendéenne" at the Gymnase; he remembers a young girl, meanly dressed and coarsely shoed, who, being questioned before him in the green-room as to what she did there, replied, much to his surprise, in a deep bass voice, "I am pursuing my studies."

The susceptible doctor, who acknowledges that with him there is no middle course between admiration and abhorrence, became from that evening a passionate admirer of Mademoiselle Rachel, whom he already pronounced *a little prodigy*. "When," said he to a friend, whom he was endeavoring to inoculate with his ardent enthusiasm, "the twelve or fifteen hundred men of wit, who constitute public opinion in Paris, shall have heard and appreciated her, that child will be the glory and fortune of 'la Comédie Française.'"

Three months elapsed, during which the *débutante* acted in succession all the stock pieces and acquired the stage practice she might have lacked hitherto; but from the 12th of June to the 9th of September not a word was said of her in the *Débats* that had been once so loud in her praise. Jules Janin, who held the sceptre of criticism in that paper, was absent from Paris, and in the interim it was wielded by Fréderic Soulié, the most noted opponent of classic tragedy, and who, therefore, could see no merit in the interpreter of Corneille and Racine.

Meanwhile the autumn was approaching, and the theatre-going public began to return to the capital. Jules Janin, who had been spending some time in Italy, made his appearance in the beginning of September. To the inquiries of his friends as to what he had seen, he answered, somewhat in the style of Sir Charles Coldstream in "Used up," "Nothing worth mentioning; Rome, Naples, Baia, Pompeii, the old shades of antiquity. And what have you got new in Paris?" "Nothing," was the reply, "unless it be a little *débutante* at the Théâtre Français—an odd little mortal who makes a singular impression. If you have nothing better to do, go and see the little wretch; though she is a perfect fright, it is worth your while to see her once."

The sentence thus lightly passed on Rachel's outward appearance was exceedingly unjust, for though at the time she was no beauty, and from a distance was seen at great disadvantage, she was far from ugly. The features were too delicate for stage effect, their peculiar charm being lost on the spectators unless within a few paces. The coal-black eyes, under the influence of intense passion, seemed to retreat under the jutting forehead, and were then supposed to be very small. Her greatest deficiency at that epoch was in her figure, which, under the pressure of sudden growth, had lengthened without having as yet acquired fullness and roundness of contour. There remained none of the angularity and scragginess of former days, while habit of the stage had imparted grace and ease. She resembled a frail reed ready to bend at the slightest breath.

The omnipotent critic finally consented to waste an hour in

hearing the "*little fright.*" At the end of the first act he had allowed that "there was something very extraordinary in the girl." At the close of the second he was in a perfect transport of admiration. "You ask me," he exclaimed, "what wonders I have seen in Italy, where every thing has been described scores of times; and you tell me there is nothing in Paris worth seeing, where, in truth, you have a new and perfect wonder. I went abroad to find antiquity dead and crumbling into dust; I return here to find it full of life and soul, embodied in yonder frail reed, &c., &c., &c." On the following Monday the *feuilleton* of the *Debats*, redolent with enthusiasm from beginning to end, revealed to the world the wondrous creature whose existence it had hitherto ignored. Eight days after, the receipts began to tell in the treasury of the Théâtre Français; within a fortnight, the fashionable absentees were hastily quitting their chateaux to witness in Paris the dramatic revolution operated by the young Jewess. Without seeking to detract from merit too universally acknowledged not to be real, it must be owned that so sudden a triumph was more the work of what in France is emphatically denominated *La Clique* than the result of that merit. To Jules Janin belongs the credit of having in the space of a week turned the tide of fortune and placed this new idol on the pedestal. She might in time have climbed alone, but by him she was lifted there at once.

Mr. Granier de Cassagnac was at this time publishing in "La Presse" a series of highly interesting and curious articles on the Classic Drama, in which he emitted, supporting them with admirable reasons, the most extraordinary opinions. Among his Quixotic attempts was one which, had it succeeded, would have completely reversed the *mise en scene* now adopted: the talented critic insisted that the tragedies of Racine and Corneille should be brought on the stage with the costumes in vogue at the time they were written; that Achilles and Julius Cæsar should appear in flowing wig and small sword, doublet and hose, and Andromaque and Bérénice in the brocade gowns of the reign of Louis XIV. He held the Greek and Roman dresses designed by David, and first introduced by Talma, to be perfectly absurd, ridiculous, and out of place, especially those of the Roman women.

"Can any thing," he exclaims, "be less picturesque than that immense woolen or muslin cocoon, with a woman in the midst, whose feet, and even whose hands, are invisible? Besides, the dress of the Romans underwent changes, and in the reign of Tiberius, the Greek fashions were adopted for furniture as well as for garments. Sumptuary laws also regulated the dress of magistrates and citizens, of men and of women, and prescribed different forms and colors, according to the age, the functions, and rank of the wearer. An actor is not dressed in character as a Roman merely because his legs are bare, his hair cut short, and that he wears a few yards of flannel on his back."

Though the arguments of Mr. Granier de Cassagnac caused no revolution in modern theatricals, his opinion on the talent and abilities of actors had equal weight with that of the eloquent partisan of the antagonistic school, nor did he withhold the meed of his praise from the young *débutante*. His praise was much less enthusiastic than that of Jules Janin, but no less valuable; and though at times tempered even to frigidity by the predilections of the critic for the modern school of drama, it was accompanied by most judicious suggestions. His commendations and strictures may be gathered from the following specimens.

"That which in our opinion particularizes Mademoiselle Rachel is that her enunciation is simple, pure, and sustained. Each word falls distinctly and harmoniously on the ear, without the loss of a syllable. The gesture naturally accords with the voice. A noble elocution is always accompanied by a dignified motion, and when the lips mumble, the arms are equally faulty in their action.

"As for saying that Mademoiselle Rachel is a prodigy, that we can not do. She acts well one scene out of three, and that is in itself a great deal. In her manner there is evidently much that is her own, and that is good; but she has also many faults which she has acquired from others. She as yet bawls too much, stamps too much, and goes in and out too sharply—all faults for which she is indebted to her venerable teachers of traditional acting. It is clear that much of her play is the second edition of Mr. Sanson's."—*Feuilleton de la Presse, September* 23, 1838.

## CHAPTER V.

Enthusiasm of the Public.—Louis Philippe and Rachel.—Royal Munificence in past and present Times.—An Increase of Salary.—System of Starring and its ill Effects.—*Monime*.—Behind the Curtains; La Rue Traversière.—A Step upward in private Life.—Peace broken between the *Sociétaires* and the Pet of the Public.—Bajazet; a critical Moment.—Reminiscences of Mademoiselle Mars.—Artistic Magnanimity and Vanity ..... 37

While severe critics thus deliberately weighed the merits and demerits of the artiste and her style of acting, the effect of that style on the public was electric, and few paused to analyze causes or cavil at details. The enthusiasm excited by Rachel repeatedly found an eloquent interpreter in Jules Janin: "This poor child, pale, slender, and ill-fed, on whom ancient tragedy leans like blind and bloody Œdipus on Antigone, alone suffices to bring crowds to the lately deserted Théâtre Français. . . . . The task of resuscitating this glorious body; of recalling the illustrious exiles; of cleaning the Augean stables of their literary rubbish; of restoring life, thought, motion, passion, interest, to the imperishable masterpieces that, for lack of an interpreter, for lack of that spark of sacred fire which emanates from the soul and lights the glance, were dying—this was indeed an immense task; and when we reflect that it is undertaken by a child, ignorant of the things of this world, who knows nothing either of poetry, of history, of the passions she delineates, or even of the language she speaks, we admire and wonder, and we ask how it is that a task deemed impracticable should have been accomplished with such apparent ease and by so weak an instrument. The reason is that this child possesses that which is superior to science — inspiration. She brought with her at her birth the something divine, *mens divinior*, that feeds poetry. Her very ignorance was of more use to her than study; had she realized the extent of her undertaking, how thick was the layer of ashes that concealed the spark she was to reanimate

with her breath, had she known how dead was the corpse to which she was uniting her timid and sickly sixteenth year, she would, *certes*, have recoiled, and forsaken the work.

"Fortunately, she saw not the danger; she rushed into it with dauntless brow; she put her trust in the great masters whom none of those around her trusted; she did not despair of the master-pieces insulted by the present generation; her very boldness carried her through; her faith saved her, her natural good sense preserved her from all declamation. She had conquered her domain; she had done more than conquer it, she had discovered it, and now reigned there a sovereign."

We have left behind us the trials and vicissitudes of Rachel's early youth, and the succeeding pages record an uninterrupted series of triumphs, varied only by pleasing incidents in public life, and by no very severe heart-aches in the private circle.

On the 1st of October, 1838, the theatre, completely crammed — every seat having been taken beforehand — drew between 5 and 6000 francs. The triumphant days of Talma and Mlle. Mars when at the zenith of their fame were even equaled. The princes of the house of Orleans all came in succession to see the phenomenon. The duchess testified her approbation by the gift of a bracelet—a gold chain clasped by a cushion bearing a dog. This simple gift would, a few years later, have appeared to the spoiled actress but a poor token; but it was then a great thing for her, the rather, too, as it was not customary for the family then on the throne to take any notice of *débutantes*. The sovereign himself, who never went to any theatre, honored the star by going to see her in the part of *Emilie* in "Cinna." A judicious friend took care that the king should meet the heroine as he passed out. His majesty, taking her trembling hand in his, assured her very kindly that he had been much pleased with her performance, and would be glad to see her again. Bashful and confused in attempting to express her gratitude, Mademoiselle Rachel addressed the king as *Monsieur*. When subsequently reminded of her mistake by her companion, Madame Tousez, she merrily excused it, saying that she was so accustomed to converse with the Greek and Roman monarchs, she had neglected to learn how to speak to those of modern date.

During preceding reigns, an actress whose performance had attracted the notice and received the approbation of royalty would have been honored with magnificent testimonials of that approbation. From the gracious Marie Antoinette she would have received several costly dresses, to which Madame Adelaide (the daughter of Louis XV.) would have added a set of jewels. The generous Josephine would have sent, through one of her chamberlains, a magnificent tiara; Queen Hortense, an Indian shawl; and, *certes*, the Emperor Napoleon would not have failed to send a page bearing a present gift of five hundred louis, and a deed of pension of at least six thousand francs. We have recorded the simple offering of the Duchess of Orleans. On the day after the king's visit to the theatre, a footman in the royal livery brought Mademoiselle Rachel a present of one thousand francs from his majesty. Times were changed; the court of the citizen king was less lavish or less rich than that of his predecessors on the throne, and the royal gift was held to be munificent; it was, moreover, the first that had been bestowed on an actor or actress since the advent of Louis Philippe.

Great indeed must have been the astonishment of Rachel herself at this unexpected and extraordinary success. It was not as though she had won the favor of an intelligent public at her first appearance. She had been playing for months with the negative success resulting from the applause of the herd of low and unappreciating co-religionists, who had encouraged her more from *esprit de corps* than real admiration, and she found herself transferred suddenly into another sphere, and receiving the homage and plaudits of the most refined, difficult, and exacting audience in the world.

On the 1st of October her engagement of three years at 4000 francs per annum was voluntarily canceled by the grateful committee of management, and renewed at the rate of 8000 francs per annum. Until the year 1840, this was deemed enormous, as the extravagant salaries now paid to favorite artists had never yet been heard of, and the system of starring and the exacting demands of those petted autocrats were unknown. The invention belongs exclusively to the English and Americans, and has proved a baneful one to both the public

and the managers. Art itself has been a loser by this pitiful system of attracting and concentrating the attention of the public on one person at the expense of all the other actors, who are depressed and impoverished in order that one lucky individual may be enriched and spoiled. The result is the ruin of managers, the failure of enterprise, and the death of art, which lives, not by one, but by all.

Shortly after, "Mithridates" was revived for Rachel, who, in the part of *Monime*, elicited new bursts of admiration. The committee presented her with its first gift, consisting of all the plays in which she had appeared, each separately and splendidly bound, with her name and the date of her first performance in the part inscribed in golden letters on the back. Shortly after, the committee presented to the gentle and sublime Monime a tiara of gold and precious stones, thus splendidly recording the triumph of the queen even when she falls in the snare laid for her by the wily King of Pontus.

Though the public thus graciously received Mademoiselle Rachel's *Monime*, critics were not unanimous in its praise, and Granier de Cassagnac was particularly severe: "*Mithridates was ridiculously played. . . . . Mademoiselle Rachel uttered fifteen lines decently, and all the rest of the part in the coldest and most colorless manner.*"—*Feuilleton of* "*La Presse*," *October* 7, 1838.

While one of the writers of "La Presse" thus sweepingly anathematized the style of the actress, another, and one of no little influence in the literary world, was as extreme in commendations. The *feuilleton* of the 18th of December, signed by the *Vicomte de Launay*, the pseudonym of the gifted wife of the editor, extols the talent of Mademoiselle Rachel in extravagant terms. The enthusiasm, however, finds an explanation in the *feuilleton* of the 29th, signed by the same *nom de plume:* "Mademoiselle Rachel was last Tuesday sublime in 'Bajazet.' The progress she makes is marvelous. Among the *on dits*, it is rumored that Madame Emile de Girardin has just finished a tragedy entitled 'Judith,' written expressly for Mademoiselle Rachel."

At this stage of her successful career Rachel was living at No. 37 Rue Traversière St. Honoré, a street since called Rue de la Fontaine Molière, and the contrast presented by her pub-

lic and private life was curious enough. At home, she who, in the part of a tragic princess, had some hours before been deluged with bouquets and applauded to the skies, resembled Cinderella after her escape from the ball, surrounded by all the attributes of poverty. The dwelling itself was scarcely larger than the cobbler's stall,

"That served him for parlor, for kitchen, and hall,"

and consisted of a dining-room containing a table and a few chairs, the bed-room of the father and mother, and a kitchen, of which Rachel had charge, and which was kept scrupulously neat and in excellent order. In the kitchen was a steep staircase leading to an attic in which were three small beds; in one of these slept Rosalie and Charlotte, in the other Raphael, and in the third Rachel with the little Emilia, then three years old. In this mean bed, used by day as a sofa, the star that nightly drew all the denizens of the world of fashion to one common centre was wont to con the splendid creations of Racine and Corneille, developing that marvelous faculty of interpreting each master-piece which astonished as much as it delighted the public. Those who were then on terms of intimacy with her remember her in the little kitchen preparing the vegetables for the *pot au feu*, chatting meanwhile with the friend who had happened to look in, and now and then interrupting her culinary cares to still the noise of the younger children, over whom she exercised a maternal surveillance in the absence of the mother. In all things, from the most trifling to the most important, Rachel preserved the same quiet, grave, even dignified aspect; and it was something akin to the ludicrous to see her put down the carrot she was scraping in order to bestow the most unpoetical, the most matter-of-fact of all corrections on the refractory little sister, with the same unmoved, nay, almost solemn expression of countenance, then return to her occupation and the subject she was discussing, as though the interlude had been a part of the performance announced in the programme. There was no explosion of anger, no violent scolding; the whipping was by rule, and constituted part of a system.

Meanwhile the success of Rachel was daily on the increase. The most aristocratic circles were anxious to have her appear in

their *salons;* but this her severe and judicious professor stoutly opposed. He interdicted all soirées, all readings in private circles, alleging that Rachel owed it to the public and to her own fame to devote all her time to study. An exception which opened the door to all other invitations was finally made in favor of a Polish countess, who pleaded that her husband, confined to his chair by continual indisposition, could not go and hear the young actress on the stage. An elegant turquoise bracelet clasped with a knot of small diamonds was the token of gratitude of the hostess. The pleasure with which Rachel received and wore this gift far surpassed that which she has since felt in the many splendid ones presented to her. Then it was the joy of the girl, delighted with an ornament. A far less innocent feeling was that with which in after years she greeted every addition to her casket.

The precedent of the Polish countess was urged by those whom it was policy not to offend; another dramatic soirée and another present—a turquoise serpent—was the result. The rule once broken, there was a perfect inundation, and the teacher's advice was wholly disregarded. It may have been quite as beneficial for her to go into society as to study in the solitude of her attic. The actor should study human nature in all its phases, and the knowledge acquired in books is turned to better account when tested on living types. The proof of this is that the talent of Rachel, far from falling off or remaining at a stand-still after her introduction into society, continued on the increase until it reached its complete development.

Rachel had now been successful in six of the most brilliant tragedies of the classic scene; she had acted *Camille* in the "Horaces;" *Emilie* in "Cinna;" *Hermione* in "Andromaque;" *Amenaïde* in "Tancrede;" *Eriphile* in "Iphigenie en Aulide;" and *Monime* in "Mithridates." On the 23d of November the play-bills announced "Bajazet."

It was while this tragedy was in rehearsal that the *sociétaires* of the Théâtre Français and the partisans of Mademoiselle Rachel commenced the series of complaints and recriminations that for some time divided newspaper writers and the public into two parties. The Théâtre Français, which, as al-

ready mentioned, had been declining so rapidly as to have reached the brink of irretrievable ruin at the advent of Rachel, was now, thanks to her popularity, in a most prosperous vein. The actress who for two months had played to a "beggarly array of empty boxes," and to her Israelite friends in the pit and upper tier, now brought into the house the unprecedented sum of 6000 francs on every night she played. The net receipts for the month of October had amounted to 100,000 francs; the increase in the receipts of the theatre amounted to from 65 to 70,000 francs. Though a large portion of the profits went into the pockets of the *sociétaires*, the latter were not the less disposed to find fault with the management, against which they brought the charge of sacrificing the future prosperity of the theatre to that which could only prove a momentary fit of enthusiasm on the part of the public. They urged—and the event proved they were right—that Rachel would soon manifest the most unbounded pretensions; that she was only enriching them for the present to ruin them afterward; that the precedent would prove the bane of the management.

It has been shown that Rachel entered the Théâtre Français in March, 1838, at a salary of 4000 francs per annum for three years, and that the management, in the month of October, very liberally agreed to cancel this contract, and renew it at a salary of 8000 francs per annum up to April 1st, 1840. There was a stipulated forfeit of 50,000 francs in case of non-fulfillment of the engagement, and the actress was to provide her own dresses. The management, however, presented her with three of the most expensive of her costumes, with a sum of 1000 francs in November, and another similar sum in December.

No sooner were these advantages obtained than more were demanded by the rapacious father of Mademoiselle Rachel. While the daughter studied her splendid Greek and Roman characters, and conveyed to worshiping thousands the noblest sentiments of the human heart, the prudent papa studied the labyrinthine mazes of the *Code Civil*, and, becoming learned in the law, found out that engagements contracted by minors are easily annulled. Both father and daughter came to the satis-

factory conclusion that glory was a marketable commodity, only to be valued by what it brought in ready money.

The first demand for his daughter was an increase of salary, raising it to the sum received by a Councilor of State—12,000 francs per annum. In 1839, in addition to the fixed salary of 12,000 francs, he demanded from 300 to 500 francs perquisites (*feux*) each time she played, according as the receipts of the theatre varied from 4000 to 5000 francs and upward—the title of *sociétaire* with a full share, with 12,000 francs from the *subvention*, and four months *congé* every year: the whole claim might be computed at the moderate sum of 60,000 francs per annum.

The management was thunderstruck. It was currently reported that when Rachel went to take her customary lesson of Sanson, her teacher, much astonished that he should have had the polishing of so high-priced a jewel, inquired if, indeed, she had manifested such pretensions as rumor had brought to his ears. To this Rachel coolly replied that, according to the *Code Civil*, she was at liberty to cancel her engagements and stipulate for better terms. Sanson indignantly exclaimed that she needed no lessons of him, as he taught declamation, not chicanery, and that he was not in the habit of associating with those who sought the measure of their honor and delicacy within the limits of the *Code Civil*. "Your talent," added the teacher, dashing to the ground a little *statuette* of Rachel, "will be shattered and annihilated like that image." He concluded by motioning his pupil to the door with a "*Sortez !*" that she might have copied with success in the part of *Roxane*.

While *savans*, philosophers, men of letters, critics, and enthusiastic crowds of youths from the colleges and schools—the rising generation that constituted the hope of France—sat entranced, listening with beating hearts and glistening eyes to the grand Alexandrines of *Corneille;* watching on the varying brow of the actress the expression of the passion she uttered, and themselves passing from pity to rage, from love to hatred, from indignant scorn to satiated vengeance, as her eloquent interpretation bore them along—she, the pythoness delivering the oracles of the god of light, drew her inspiration from the golden calf, the god of her forefathers, and inwardly computed the metallic value of enthusiasm.

A portion of the press, siding with the *sociétaires*, loudly exclaimed against these rapacious exactions. Even Jules Janin repented having *created* Rachel, and talked of demolishing (*sic*) his *pen-work*.

It was too late, however; the public had formed an opinion, and was resolved to stand by it. In the heat of the quarrel, the announcement of "Bajazet" gave it a new stimulus, and afforded an opportunity for the manifestation of the antagonistic feelings of each party. On the night of Rachel's first appearance in the difficult part of *Roxane*, October 23d, symptoms of hostility were evident throughout the house, and her failure was confidently predicted. In the beginning of her career, Rachel, playing from intuition, and impelled by the irresistible attraction that led her on the stage, was unconcerned and fearless. When, however, the tide of success had set in, by what may appear a contradiction, but one which the analyzer of the human heart will readily understand, she became exceedingly timid whenever she was to appear in a new part. She had now tasted the intoxicating joys of triumph, and was the more inclined to dread a defeat that might wither her laurels. Thus it was that on *first* nights she was never as perfect as on the succeeding ones when she felt sure of public support.

With these feelings, the effect produced upon her by the icy coldness with which she was received when she appeared on this critical occasion may be readily conceived. The very *Romans* paid by her adversaries sat with immovable hands. The stifled laughter, the whisperings in the boxes, the anxious looks of friends, and the hostile ones of foes, all contributed to shake her courage when most she needed it—in that stumbling-block of genius—in *Roxane!* Her tongue was almost paralyzed, her breath was choked, and for the first time she was completely frightened.

Envy was justified and triumphant; the star had proved but a fleeting meteor; she could play but such parts as were drilled into her, and even then she required long study; she was but an automaton, &c., &c., &c.

But though on the first night the woman had sunk dismayed at sight of the unfriendly brows, on the second the *artiste*

had conquered her terrors, and again taken her place of supremacy with the dignified assurance of conscious genius. Abjuring Olympus and its pagan divinities, she trod with firm step the volcanic soil of the harem, and with admirable *entente* presented the vivid picture of the struggle between love and ambition. She gave in the difficult *rôle* of the absolute sultana the most complete personification of the despotism, the stern, pitiless politics of the vast empire of the world at that period, joined to the most truly feminine embodiment of love. With *Amurath* she exhibited the remorseless, unflinching determination of the Eastern male despot; with *Bajazet*, the gentle, yielding affection of woman, whatever be her clime; as the duped lover, the angry passions of both sexes.

The second night her success was absolute; on the third there was a riot at the doors to obtain admittance, while the scene within the house beggared description. Every one seemed possessed by a frantic admiration, which was vented in a storm of applause. The ovation thus tributed contrasted with the chill, sulky aspect the same audience presented on the foregoing night.

But, though envy was foiled, it was not disarmed. The critics caviled at her peculiar delivery of certain passages, more especially that of the famous "*Sortez!*" in the second act, when *Roxane* offers the throne to *Bajazet*, and the latter refuses it, alleging specious reasons in order to conceal the real one—his love for *Atalide*. While Rachel listened to his answer, the rage she refrained from uttering was most vividly depicted on the expressive countenance; when he had ended, her look was such as no other woman could assume: it spoke not so much the fury of the offended woman, loud, stormy, tearing passion to rags, as that of the insulted sovereign, deep, concentrated, implacable, ferocious in its very calmness. *Bajazet* had evidently scorned the love of a tigress, not a dove. With extended hand she motioned him to the door, and with her harsh voice uttered the "*Sortez!*" that brought down enthusiastic applause from judges of refined taste. In that little word the sentence was signed, the dumb executioner summoned, the death knelled. No rant, no violent gesture, no loud burst of passion accompanied it; the utterance was calm as

that of a god delivering the fiat of fate—too calm in its grand eloquence to please the multitude.

It was on this occasion that the charge that she had no heart, no feminine softness, no real feeling, was brought against Rachel. "*Roxane*," urged the critics, "is a woman before she is a sultana, and, as a woman should give full scope to anger and jealousy, she should throw herself, dagger in hand, on *Bajazet*, yet ere she strikes be disarmed by a look; then, and as though to guard against her own weakness, command his absence with the '*Sortez !*'" This was a most lame and impotent interpretation of the heroine's temper. It was the expression of feeling of a commonplace character, not that of an exceptional being—not that of the proud sultana, whose consciousness of power controls and guides her impetuous nature —of *Roxane*, who has mutes who *kill* at her bidding. Had *Roxane* herself touched a dagger, it would have been to strike at once. Still criticism would not be gainsaid, and for years the obnoxious rendering of the "*Sortez !*" was harped upon and discussed, until, weary of the struggle, Rachel gave up her own conception of the part, and adopted that which was forced upon her: it was less true to nature, and therefore more pleasing to perverted tastes.

A little incident took place at this time which is worth recording as a manifestation of liberal feeling but too rare among artists. Mademoiselle Mars was still on the stage, though the fickle public, faithless to its former idol, frequently reminded her that it was time for her to retire from before the footlights, whose glare revealed but too plainly the ravages of time. Accustomed to the splendid galaxy of a past reign, to a Duchesnois, a Rancourt, a Georges, playing with a Talma to the enthusiastic delight of an audience of crowned heads, Mademoiselle Mars, herself, perhaps, the most brilliant of those stars, was rather incredulous with regard to the merits of the planet then in the ascendant; she chose to judge by her own eyes and ears of the justice of the plaudits so lavishly bestowed. During the first act—the piece was "Les Horaces"—the ex-queen of tragedy listened coldly; accustomed to the style of former heroines, she pronounced *Camille rather weak*. But at the fourth act, while the public was warmly applauding,

some of the flatterers who surrounded Mademoiselle Mars, thinking to soothe feelings which they imagined must be hurt by the triumph obtained by her young successor, disdainfully echoed the *rather weak*, adding such derogatory epithets as *milk and water*, lukewarm, &c., &c.

"Would you have her roar like a bull?" exclaimed the indignant Mars, full of sympathetic admiration.

During this season of successive triumphs the "Bourgeois Gentilhomme" was revived. In this comedy there is a scene in which all the *personel* of the company, from the reigning favorite down to the candle-snuffer, is bound to appear in order to make up the show. All march on and off the stage in double file, and the public, recognizing its favorites, applauds each more or less warmly. Mademoiselle Mars, not being able to endure the fatigue of the costume required (a Turkish one) for the ceremony of the Mamamonchi, wore a Louis XVI. dress, and Mademoiselle Rachel the Oriental one of *Roxane*. The public, aware that the latter was coming, broke out at her entrance into a phrensy of applause that lasted long after her disappearance. When the curtain fell, the declining and the rising stars were both clamorously recalled. Mademoiselle Mars was the first to enter, with that aristocratic air, that *pur sang* look that would have been deemed haughty had it not been tempered by the exceeding grace of the woman and finished *artiste*. She acknowledged the loud acclamations of the public with a slight and gracious rather than grateful inclination, and a look of conscious desert, as though she would have said, "I thank you, good friends, for myself and the young thing who follows me."

She felt what her brow expressed, that she had come to receive a tribute due to her. Rachel, on the contrary, allowing Mademoiselle Mars to precede her a few paces, thus tacitly acknowledging her supremacy, bowed with grateful humility, as though thankful for a gift. This difference was not studied in either case; it was innate, and the reason may be found, perchance, in the annals of the two races: one had reached its supremacy; it was the part of the other to bend and cringe to every oppressor.

*Apropos* of this procession, it was subsequently seen that

Rachel's humility did not make her forget her interests. In the agreement made with the Théâtre Français, Mademoiselle Rachel was entitled to a perquisite of 500 francs for every time she chose to appear more than twice a week. She took care, therefore, to join the procession in "Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme," on every occasion claiming the 500 francs for this mute performance of a few minutes. The committee, however, deeming this too expensive a walk across the stage, disputed the payment. From that time the *tragédienne* declined appearing in the show, even on the occasion of Molière's birthday. No pay, no walk.

---

## CHAPTER VI.

1839.

A Step higher in private Life.—The Maimed Student and a Scene in "Les Horaces."—The Friendship of the Great.—L'Abbaye aux Bois.—Madame Récamier.—The Jewish Actress and a Dignitary of the Church.—A Stranger to Venus.—Rachel in Comedy.—"Esther."

The prosperous state of their finances now enabled the Felix family to indulge in the comforts, if not the luxuries of life. In the winter of 1839, the mean lodgings they had hitherto occupied were exchanged for better ones on a second floor of the Passage Vérot Dodat. This apartment Rachel's earnings enabled them to furnish respectably, and she had a room to herself for the first time. The chief ornament of this room, which was long, lofty, and narrow, consisted in the trophies she had won. To the three curtain poles of the bed were hung three garlands decorated with ribbons, bearing devices embroidered in gold recording her success. Other similar crowns were hung on the walls. The room of her parents was next to her own, and was furnished in a manner that to them was quite luxurious, yet they took possession of it as though accustomed to it all their life.

It was about this time that Rachel introduced into the *rôle* of *Camille* the by-play that is so effective in the second scene of the fourth act, when *Valère* is describing the combat of the Horatii and the Curiatii. The following incident suggested

the improvement. The actress, who was slightly indisposed, had remained in her chamber one morning, when she heard a caller in the *salon*. Curious to know who it was, she rose and went close to the door, through which she distinctly heard the voice, and recognized it as that of an acquaintance of the family, a young student of surgery. In answer to the question put by her mother and sisters as to why he had been so long absent, he told a fearful story of some accident, while dissecting, that had necessitated the amputation of his hand. Rachel, already ill, was so overcome with horror at this description that she fainted. The noise of her fall brought the family to her assistance, and she soon recovered. It was then the idea occurred to her that if she, who was not particularly interested in this young man, had been so much impressed by the narrative of his accident, how terrible must be the shock on the nerves of one who hears of her lover's death. She remarked to Sanson that when she next played *Camille* she would introduce a new effect. She did so, and met with great success. As *Valère* proceeded in his speech, Mademoiselle Rachel listened with the greatest expression of grief and horror depicted on her countenance and in her attitude, and when he arrived at the bloody catastrophe she fell senseless. The actor who played *Valère*, addressing his discourse to old *Horace*, does not see *Camille*. Astonished to find himself interrupted by such unusual tokens of approbation, he fancied *he* must be particularly good that evening, and, excited by this idea, made extraordinary efforts to deserve such plaudits, throwing a vast amount of heat and passion in his part, to which no one was listening, so much did the mute acting of *Camille* engross attention.

Success seemed to pursue this fortunate family: the management again canceled Rachel's engagement, and renewed it at 20,000 francs per annum. It became the fashion to receive the pet of the public in private circles, and invitations from the highest quarters and rich gifts were of daily occurrence. Rachel was the rage, and not only the most aristocratic French *salons*, but also the most distinguished foreign residents, made a point of adding the attraction of her presence to their fêtes. The actress was the fashionable luxury of the day, and must be had at any cost of money or of pride.

Such was the influence of vanity, that some of the noblest children of once proud Spain—the Duchess of Berwick and Alba, the Marchioness of Alcanices, the Princess of Anglona, the Countess of Toreno, M. de Roca de Togares, ex-minister of Marine, the Marquis de los Llanos, the Count de la Vega del Pozo, &c., &c.—condescended to admit the daughter of the Jew peddler on terms of momentary equality. The high-born Novailles received her in their morning circles, and the duke became her most assiduous adviser, often spending whole evenings with her. Ministers of state desired her to appoint the day when she would dine with them; Count Duchatel, minister of the interior, presented her with a choice library, and Madame Duchatel was extremely fond of her society.

In the convent of the Abbaye aux Bois was wont to assemble a semi-mundane, semi-mystic circle, composed of some of the most distinguished fragments of the Restoration and of some of the most respected ruins of the Empire, and of which Madame de Récamier, the celebrated ex-queen of beauty, was the cynosure. This lady, who had survived the charms that had been the envy of her contemporary, Madame de Stael, and the wealth that had given them relief, still preserved the amiability that had characterized her through life, and which, in her declining years, brought around her the most eminent personages of the day. True to the friendship that had so long existed between them, M. de Chateaubriand continued to visit her, and her alone, even after he had lost the use of his limbs. His faithful valet, Louis, supported him up the stairs, seated him in his arm-chair, and installed him in his favorite corner. Into this refined and fastidious circle Mademoiselle Rachel was freely admitted, and it must be owned that her modest demeanor and perfect tact proved her not unworthy of the honor. It has been said that the hope of converting the popular idol of the day contributed materially to the cordiality of her reception. If so, no fault can be found with the feeling; the public baptism in Notre Dame of the wonderful actress would have been for the Church no mean triumph, and it is probable no efforts were spared by these faithful votaries to bring about such a result.

But, though "Hermione" was possessed of the eminently

Jewish faculty of apparently conforming to the wishes of those whom it was her interest to please, she had, then at least, not the slightest idea of becoming a convert. Under the inspiration of her illustrious hosts, she studied the part of *Pauline* in "Polyeucte;" but, though she uttered before them the "*Je crois*" in accents that inspired the most sanguine hopes, she left the cœnaculum of the Rue de Sevres as much of a Jewess as she had entered it.

At one of the morning literary *réunions* at the Abbaye aux Bois, Mademoiselle Rachel was reciting to M. de Chateaubriand, at the request of Madame Récamier, passages from the *rôle* of "Pauline;" the actress was on the point of uttering the lines,

> "Mon époux, en mourant, m'a laissé ses lumières;
> Son sang dont ses bourreaux viennent de me couvrir,
> M'a dessillé les yeux et me les vient d'ouvrir
> JE VOIS, JE SAIS, JE CROIS!"

when the recitation was interrupted by the unexpected visit of the Archbishop of ——.

"Monseigneur," said Madame de Récamier, with some slight embarrassment, "permit me to present to your grace Mademoiselle Rachel, who is so obliging as to give us a scene from 'Polyeucte.'"

"I would infinitely regret," replied the visitor, "having interrupted the finest verses of Corneille; I hope I may be favored also."

No scruples prevented Rachel from continuing the part of *Pauline*. She had no hesitation in exclaiming with the convert to Christianity, *I see, I know, I believe*, before a high dignitary of the Church.

When she had concluded, the archbishop was most earnest in his praise.

"We, the ministers of the Most High," added he, "have not often the pleasure of seeing and hearing great artistes; but I have been thus fortunate twice in my life: in Florence I have heard Madame Malibran sing in a *salon*, and to Madame Récamier I am indebted for the privilege of hearing Mademoiselle Rachel. The lips that so eloquently utter those magnificent lines must be inspired by a heart filled with the sentiment they express."

To this, Mademoiselle Rachel, bowing gracefully, replied, "Monseigneur, *I believe.*"

*Apropos* of these recitations at the Abbaye aux Bois, Madame Delphine Gay, the celebrated mother of as celebrated a daughter, is reported to have given way to an amusing outburst of indignation. Returning one morning from a visit to the convent, she threw herself in an arm-chair, exclaiming,

"Can any one imagine so absurd a thing? Just fancy a parcel of rusty old academicians teaching Rachel to act *Phèdre!* Brifault, the greatest stranger to Venus, uttering

'C'est Venus toute entière à sa proie attachée!'

What can *he* know of the feelings of the victim of the goddess of love and beauty?"

It has been said that Rachel is never so happy as when she can act in comedy, and especially the *soubrettes* of Molière—parts utterly unsuited to her, and in which, however accurate her conception of the character, her hollow, cavernous voice, her tragic gait, gesture, and look, render her unendurable, not to say absurd. In certain dramatic *rôles* she has been greatly applauded; for instance, in that of *Adrienne Lecouvreur*, in which she appeared to advantage; but it was certainly more as a pretty woman than as a finished artiste that she won admiration. The success she obtained in *Adrienne* induced her to extend her incursions still farther into the domain of Mademoiselle Mars: she played in succession *Louise de Lignerolles*, *Mademoiselle de Belle Isle*, *Madame Tartuffe*, and other *rôles* of the modern drama, in all of which her voice prevented her from attaining to that degree of excellence to which her acting would have raised her.

As to the *soubrettes* of Molière, she undertook them on the following occasions:

In 1844, the theatre of the Odeon, having had a constant run of ill luck, was closed; but as the public of that quarter of Paris required a theatre, the authorities decided that the management of the Théâtre Français should provide for both theatres, one company doing duty alternately in both houses. Rachel was obliged to take her share in this work. The plan was soon found to entail too great fatigue on the performers on account of the distance between the theatres, and was very soon given up.

It was during this period of double duty that Raphael and Rebecca Felix were brought out, the insatiate father exacting, without the shadow of a pretense, that at the very *début* of these children, who had never set foot on the stage, a benefit should be granted to them. This unprecedented demand was conceded, much to the displeasure of other members of the company, who saw these young Jews thus unjustly enjoying privileges that time and merit alone obtained for others. In order to draw a crowded house on the benefit night, a tragedy was announced, after which, to increase the attraction, Rachel was to appear in the part of *Dorine* in "Tartuffe." The public, curious to see the great tragic actress in two such opposite characters, completely filled the house. The rumor that she excelled in the *rôle* of a *soubrette* had been industriously circulated; the disappointment was in proportion to the expectations that had been raised. Rachel was too much a favorite in her own line to meet with very open marks of disapprobation in attempting another; but that the attempt was not a complete failure was solely due to the courteous indulgence of the audience. The language of the saucy, pert little *Dorine*, uttered in the deep, sepulchral tones of a *Camille* calling down the wrath of heaven on the capital of the world, the tragic stride and gesture, constituted a combination of the sublime and the grotesque that sorely tried the patience of the spectators.

Four years later, on the first of July, in another extra performance on the occasion of another benefit of Raphael and Rebecca, the play being "Phèdre," followed by a little piece in one act by Marivaux, the play-bills announced that the evening would close with "Le Dépit Amoureux," in which Rachel would take the part of *Marinette*. Once again the impatience of the public was extreme to see how this genius which had reached its *apogée* would stand the test in so varied a range. This time the failure was complete and the dissatisfaction undissembled. When she entered in *soubrette* costume the applause was perfectly frantic, but she no sooner spoke than it was apparent how much she was out of place in the part, and an icy silence testified the chagrin of the audience.

On these two occasions only did Rachel ever act the *sou-*

*brettes*, and then to further the interests of her relatives, and gratify a passing caprice rather than from any vocation.

The only *rôle* added by Mademoiselle Rachel to her *repertoire* during the year 1839 was that of *Esther*. To understand in what points she failed in her conception of this character, we must call to mind what the poet intended to delineate when he wrote the part. The female characters of Racine are exquisite creations. Take them all, from *Esther* to *Bérénice*, from *Phèdre* to *Hermione*, not one but is gifted with the melting tenderness that captivates, or with the resistless stormy passion that overwhelms. In his male characters he has not been equally successful; with the exception of the vehement Orestes and the iron-willed Nero, his heroes are rather weak-brained, and seem cut out for henpecked husbands. In this Racine differs essentially from Corneille, whose male characters are splendid specimens of chivalrous love and valor, while his heroines, with the exception of the noble, the lovely *Chimène*, are raw-boned viragoes.

One of Racine's most constant opponents says that the female characters of Racine constitute a wonderful seraglio, where the poet has assembled all the glowing visions of his fancy, all the earnest passions of his soul, clothed in celestial forms. He has divided them into two distinct groups, both equally bewitching. On one side we have *Aricie*, *Andromaque*, *Iphigénie*, *Bérénice*, *Atalide*, *Esther*, and *Junie*, the women who love and who die; on the other, *Hermione*, *Phèdre*, *Roxane*, *Emilie*, the women who love and who kill; here the dove, there the lioness. Of these two natures, so diametrically opposite in feeling and expression, though actuated by the same passion, one was altogether foreign to that of Mademoiselle Rachel, and therefore beyond her power of delineation. In one of those rare, angelic characters, all feminine gentleness, mildness, and abnegation, in which, however, passion, veiled under the semblance of silent resignation and patient grief, is not the less strong, resolute, and enduring, the great actress is completely out of her sphere. Her voice has the hard, metallic tone of a trumpet; it is never choked by unshed tears, or softened by suppressed emotion. There is nothing that betrays the inward wound, the fire that consumes slowly,

but surely, without outward flame. She approaches her lover with calm brow, unmoistened eye, unfaltering voice, and resolute pace. Nothing betokens the shrinking timidity, the bashful fear, that possess so powerful a charm. She crosses the stage with dignified assurance, her voice preserving its steady, ironical tone amid the most stormy conflicts of unchained, raging passions.

All the foregoing objections apply most especially to the *rôle* of *Esther*. The ethereal and mystic beauty whose magic glance suffices to tame the Assyrian is a young, gentle, pious creature, left in a foreign land at the mercy of a conqueror, and thrown in a harem where she is surrounded by heathen women who have lost all innate modesty, and to whom religion has never taught remorse. *Esther*, the slave, the concubine, is freed by grace and legalized by love. Personified by Mademoiselle Rachel, the lovely ideal of Racine disappears; the witching dream is dispelled; the *houri* of the Asiatic harem is far from gentle, the slave is threatening, the concubine cold, the maiden imperious. Even the graceful piety of *Esther* is lost, for no heaven-inspired faith breathes in the measured accents of the daughter of Israel, speaking of her own God, the dread God of the Jews. In lieu of the almost divine creature, more visible to the mystic sense than to the eye—in lieu of this celestial vision, whose features reflect all the noble gifts that have their source in her clear, unsullied soul, this maiden, chosen among a thousand, not for a beauty that others may possess in like perfection, but for that nameless charm that gives to its possessor the empire of the world, there was a talented woman, uttering with correct precision the poetic lines, but never personifying the idea. Her qualities here are all negative; she never rants, it is true, but neither does she feel acutely; she is never carried away by violent passion, but neither has she any warmth of expression; she does not sob aloud, but she has no tears.

## CHAPTER VII.

1840.

Artistic Career.—First Period one of constant Struggle and arduous Toil.—Eminent Critics of the Day.—Granier de Cassagnac.—Jules Janin.—Theophile Gauthier.—Edouard Thierry.—The Public becomes exacting.—Incident at a Soirée.—Rachel at Eighteen.—Taxed with want of real Feeling.—Tact.—Manners.—Delicate Health.—Solicitude of the Public.

The initiatory steps in life of the actress, the narrative of the more or less extraordinary circumstances that have withdrawn her from the crowd and placed her at the entrance of the road to fame, the vicissitudes of the family circle, these are but secondary elements in her biography. Incidents of private life may amuse the reader, but what he seeks more especially in the life of an eminent actress is a page of the history of dramatic art in her time and in the country in which she won her laurels. Her stage career, therefore, constitutes the most important part of her biography.

The years 1838 and 1839 had witnessed the astonishing *débûts* of Mademoiselle Rachel. It now remained that she should consolidate her position, and justify a permanent possession of the sceptre she had seized. This could only be done by severe study; it was requisite that she should not only perfect the parts she had acted at her several *débûts*, but that she should add others to her *répertoire*, and create new *rôles* in new plays. The more indulgent the public shows itself to inexperienced but real talent, the more it is likely to exact from that talent in its maturity. This is the reason why the majority of those who have been cried up as phenomena in their youth, in after years sink into insignificance and oblivion.

This era constitutes, then, the real artistic career of Mademoiselle Rachel. Beginning with the year 1840, it closed with the American excursion, undertaken July 30, 1856, and terminated January, 1857.

The dramatic year is divided into two very distinct por-

tions, during one of which the time and services of the actor pertain exclusively to the theatre at which he is permanently engaged; during the other, which is that of his *congés*, he makes his provincial or foreign tour.

According to the terms of her engagement, Mademoiselle Rachel had a *congé* of three months in the year, June, July, and August; the remaining nine months were to be devoted exclusively to the Théâtre Français. In these nine months are to be sought the difficulties she overcame in her profession, the new *rôles* she played in known plays, and those she created in new ones; in a word, her artistic labors.

To the careful record of whatsoever worthy of note occurred in these sixteen years, there has been added in the following pages a critical analysis, or, at least, a more or less detailed sketch of the plays in which she appeared, and particularly of the characters she played.

The opinions of the eminent critics of the day have been given as being of no little importance in a work of this kind, particularly when we find the opinions of the public represented by men such as Granier de Cassagnac, Theophile Gauthier, and Jules Janin, the setters up and destroyers of theatrical idols.

Monsieur Granier de Cassagnac, whose literary articles then appeared in "La Presse," but who was subsequently appointed *député*, and distinguished himself by his energetic and eloquent political articles in the "Constitutionnel" in 1848, and by his strenuous adhesion to the emperor, was in 1840 bound by ties of friendship and fellowship to the disciples of the modern school. In point of fact, he was a classicist, especially with regard to Corneille, for whom he found no praise sufficient. This predilection might have been the result of the affinity that his own stern, uncompromising character presented in some respects with that of the great father of French tragedy. As for Racine, he treated him as cavalierly and unceremoniously as did the partisans of the romantic school.

Jules Janin, the *feuilletonist* of the "Débats," was also a champion of the classical school, notwithstanding which he attacked it unscrupulously whenever it suited his fitful moods. Jules Janin is one of those capricious geniuses who, when a

word presents itself on which an article may be spun out, no matter how paradoxical or antagonistic to their former judgments, never hesitate to present that article to the astonished public. Thus he frequently spares his friends as little as his opponents, lashing the first and praising the latter with equal injustice and equal eloquence, or, at any rate, with that torrent of high-sounding words and intricate phrases that is too often taken as the current coin of eloquence. Yet, though he thus permits too exuberant a fancy and a too ready pen to run on somewhat at random sometimes, Jules Janin is at others one of the most truly eloquent, most fascinating, most moving of writers. He possesses, too, sterling qualities of the heart, not always found in the *feuilletonist*. Jules Janin has been invariably the apologist of the fallen, the respectful and generous advocate of the absent; he has been ever more ready to present his homage to royalty in exiles than to royalty on the throne, and that, too, in revolutionary days, when such conduct was not only noble, but courageous.

Theophile Gauthier, also of "La Presse," was the zealous organ of the school of Victor Hugo and Co.; but, though he attacked the classic authors, he was just to their interpreters, weighing with impartiality their artistic merits and demerits. Theophile Gauthier had commenced life as an amateur painter, but, finding that he was not destined in that vocation ever to pass the limits of mediocrity, he exchanged the brush for the pen, and soon justified his new choice. Some vestiges of the first taste are perceivable in the critical analyses of the *feuilletonist;* the painter's eye for the correctness of details and the picturesque of the *ensemble* adds much interest to the eloquence of his descriptions. No other critic conveyed so lively, so faithful an impression of Rachel. He paints admirably, and with more minuteness than any other writer, the effects she produced, her peculiar points; every little detail that can give an idea of her person, even to the most minute particulars of her toilette, are graphically reproduced, yet none seem trivial or out of place. His pen photographs the actress in all her *rôles*. M. Gauthier is at the present day the dramatic *feuilletonist* of the "Moniteur." Edouard Thierry must not pass unnoticed among the eminent writers who wielded the

delicate pruning-knife of criticism. Of all those whose judgment and opinions on Rachel passed current with the public, he was perhaps the most conscientious, exact, and impartial. M. Thierry writes at present in the *partie litteraire* of the "Moniteur."

So far fortune had seemed to forget her usual fickleness in favor of her privileged child. Prosperity had constantly expanded her sails: the flowing tide of success had known no check. With the year 1840 there came a sudden reaction; the hot enthusiasm that had bubbled up to such a mad pitch, cooled off, and descended to a degree of lukewarmness and indifference very alarming to the prospects of its object. The symptoms of this distressing state of things were plainly manifested on the night of the benefit of Mademoiselle Mars, on which occasion Mademoiselle Rachel played in "Andromaque."

The very critics that had hitherto been so loud in her praise were as ready to cavil and condemn, and Jules Janin himself, in his attempt to vindicate the inconstancy of her quondam admirers, is compelled to lay the blame on the insatiate desire for *something new* that is the ruling passion of the public. The idol had not changed: therein consisted her fault; the change was in her audience, that knew her by heart. She had played her *répertoire* over and over again, until it had palled upon the satiated ears of her hearers, who could tell beforehand every gesture, intonation, and look. Every expression of love, every outcry of grief, every storm of passion, every shade of irony and glance of haughty pride, every well-prepared effect, was stereotyped. The audience knew all the strong and all the weak points, where to be attentive and where to be careless, where to applaud and where to be indifferent. The very perfection that had formerly elicited such raptures now became intolerably same; for, however admirable the acting, it failed to interest, inasmuch as it no longer astonished; it raised no expectations, it elicited no curiosity. Unequal, and therefore inferior acting, where the unforeseen excludes monotony, would have been preferred to this unvaried correctness. The audience had come with the best intentions of being entertained. They had counted upon a certain amount of sensation; they had stipulated for emotions of grief, terror, pity, and delight:

they found themselves listening coldly to the finest passages, insensible to the most telling points, and wearied with the length of the play!

But we will take Jules Janin's own words:

"All the talent in the world, especially when continually applied to the same dramatic works, will not satisfy continually the hearer. . . . . What pleases in a great actor, as in all arts that appeal to the imagination, is the unforeseen. When I am utterly ignorant of what is to happen, when I do not know, when you yourself do not know what will be your next gesture, your look, what passion will possess your heart, what outcry will burst from your terror-stricken soul, then, indeed, I am willing to see you daily, for each day you will be new to me; to-day I may blame, to-morrow praise; yesterday you were all powerful, to-morrow, perhaps, you may hardly win from me a word of admiration; so much the better, then, if you draw from me unexpected tears; if in my heart you strike an unknown fibre; but tell me not of hearing night after night great artists who every time present the exact counterpart of what they were the preceding one."

Critics were unanimous in exacting that Rachel should study new *rôles*, saying that it was the only way to renew this young talent, so full of sap and vigor, in lieu of allowing it to languish and grow stale in two or three invariably recurring parts, thus condemning to motionless inactivity this powerful intelligence.

Mademoiselle Rachel, on her side, having accustomed herself to draw the greater part of her strength from the constant support of the public, at the sight of the coldness and indifference with which her former enthusiastic patrons now greeted her, was herself chilled and paralyzed; she stopped short at the aspect of the unimpressed, unmoved galleries. The applause of her audience had become indispensable to her; the moment it was lacking she became powerless. She could not endure this ill-boding silence; she imagined her gesture, her look, her voice, would instantly break the spell; failing in this, she became confused; she forgot the character she represented, and, to win back the stimulus she lacked, rushed headlong into all the extremes and exaggerations of dramatic art; where

she was wont to show irritation, she became furious; where she was wont to be proud and dignified, she was pompous; her irony, usually her most powerful weapon, assumed a sharp, strange tone, and marred the intended effect.

Thus the habit of praise without limits, and admiration without counterpoise, had borne bitter fruits. The most passionate of her adherents gave vent to scolding fits, crying out that the plaything was stale. And this is one of the terrible but inevitable phases of every artist's life.

There was undoubtedly some relaxation of exertion on the part of the actress, who did not sufficiently bear in mind that in public as in private life it is easier to win favor than to retain it. But there was also great and manifest injustice on the part of the public in requiring from this girl of eighteen, with only two years' stage practice, the qualities of a consummate actress whose talent had reached its maturity, to whom years and long familiarity with the boards have given experience, and whose countenance, losing all individuality, has become a plastic mask, reproducing at will every emotion, every contradictory passion. To have obtained such unqualified applause as had been awarded to her in the characters of *Hermione*, of *Camille*, of *Eriphile*, of *Roxane*, by the veteran playgoers who remembered Mademoiselle Duchesnois, Mademoiselle Mars, and Mademoiselle Georges in their prime; to have acted with unquestionable talent, if not to perfection, *Amenaïde*, *Monime*, and *Esther*, might surely have been deemed sufficient in this young genius.

Nor was the creation of new *rôles* the only demand of the exacting public. Qualities completely foreign to her nature and the opposites of those she possessed were clamorously called for by the critics, even by her warmest partisans. No one seemed to concede that she to whom nature had granted the facility of excelling in the delineations of bitter irony, indignant rage, vindictive hatred, and furious jealousy, could not as readily portray excessive tenderness, melting grief, all the mild and gentle passions, with the infinite and delicately defined shades that lend them so great a charm and insure them so powerful a hold on the human heart.

Another reason for the coldness of a portion of the public

may be found in the disgust the sordid, grasping temper of old Felix had excited. The dissensions between the management and the exacting Jew had engendered a bitterness of which the daughter was made to feel the effects. Though it may be urged that as a minor she was not to blame for the venality of her parents, after years proved that when free to follow the dictates of her own will she was no degenerate daughter of Israel, and quite as ready as her fair ancestress and prototype to possess herself of the gods of silver and of gold at the expense of honesty and justice.

Notwithstanding the urgings of her partisans and the clamorous complaints of the press, the actress followed the judicious advice of the enlightened guide she had chosen. She wisely abstained from undertaking the creation of new *rôles*. To give life to the idea of an author, to open a path on ground where no foot had preceded hers, to venture on the unknown without the guide of traditional success and failures to teach her what to follow and what to avoid was, for one so completely illiterate, to rush into perils from which no exertions of her untutored genius could extricate her. The task required deep study of the character, thorough knowledge of the history, nation, habits, manners, public and private life, even of the expression of countenance and external appearance of the personage to be represented. Mademoiselle Rachel contented herself with adding several revivals to her *répertoire* during this and the two succeeding years, and it was not until the year 1843 that she ventured to create a *rôle*, when study had better, though even then not sufficiently, fitted her for the effort.

Mademoiselle Rachel was at this time eighteen years of age, and her constitution, which was never strong, seemed to be giving way altogether. She could play but twice a week, and those who saw her at the close of each performance deemed that one must be her last, so frail, so reed-like was her figure. She was threatened with a complaint of the lungs, and was subject to frequent fits of illness. At the recurrence of each attack, the anxious solicitude of the public was manifested in the most flattering manner, as much interest being taken in her health as though she had been some potentate wielding the destinies of nations. The newspapers published daily bul-

letins of her health, and her door was besieged by anxious inquirers of the highest rank.

But, though so often incapacitated by illness, when able to exert herself, Rachel found time to make some amends by study for the deficiencies of early education. She made herself mistress of the grammatical difficulties of the language whose literary gems she so splendidly interpreted. She soon learned to write correctly, and she had been too long accustomed to the pure and classical grace of Corneille and Racine not to express herself with elegance in conversation. This girl, whose childhood had been spent in the haunts of poverty and in the companionship of the illiterate, the vulgar, and low-bred, had so keen an intuition of the *proprieties* of high-toned society, so great a facility of adaptation, so ready a tact, so quick a perception of the beautiful, that she was never out of place in the aristocratic *salons* into which, in the early part of her career, she was admitted. She was there well-bred, gentle, and unaffected, accepting and acting the part of a gentlewoman as though to the manner born. Her taste was cultivated by the study of the classics, and she enjoyed the advantage of frequenting the most refined circles, as well as the intimacy of the most accomplished men in France. In the *salon* of Mademoiselle Rachel, of which she did the honors with the most perfect grace and tact, not only the illustrious of the literary world, but the most eminent statesmen, the most talented politicians of the day were wont to assemble.

Though nature and habit were thus broken in and curbed under the yoke of will, they returned at times in full force, justifying the proverb of "*chassez le naturel il retourne au galop.*" Whether this was the case, or whether excess of vanity or some other cause had evil-disposed the idol, it is certain that on some occasions she behaved with excessive discourtesy. The following, which was related to the writer by the chief performer in the little scene, may be relied on as a specimen of her occasional shortcomings.

The niece of Ducis, Madame Victoire Babois, so well known as the author of the admirable "Maternal Elegies," and who had reached the advanced age of 78, was then prostrated by

the illness that was to terminate her existence. The celebrated poetess, Madame Mélanie Waldor, seeking to amuse her old friend with the little items of news of the day, mentioned that Madame de Gasparin, the wife of the Minister of the Interior, was to give a magnificent *soirée*, and that Mademoiselle Rachel was among the expected guests. "Ah!" exclaimed Madame Babois, "before I die I will address a few lines to this great tragic actress; you shall have them to-morrow." On the following day Madame Waldor received from the hands of the dying woman a dozen lines, which, to her great regret, she has since lost.

Some twelve hundred persons that evening anxiously awaited the arrival of Mademoiselle Rachel, who was then performing in "Les Horaces" at the Théâtre Français. At half past eleven she had not arrived. No other artist, no poet, no musician, had been invited to contribute their talents toward lightening the *ennui* of the cold, tedious official *soirée*. Madame de Gasparin and many of her distinguished guests earnestly requested that Madame Waldor would recite one of her own poems; but that lady, unwilling to place herself on the same footing with Mademoiselle Rachel, whose business it was to entertain the public, positively declined. She came at last —the long-expected idol. A dead silence ensued, shortly after succeeded by a universal stir and bustle; every one was endeavoring to get near to see, and, if possible, to speak to her who created all this excitement.

The Jewish Melpomenè was dressed in white, and was exceedingly thin, but on her brow she wore the consecrating seal of destiny—the tragic look that was the indelible sign of her mission. Had it not been for this redeeming point, she might have been thought insignificant. She recited with consummate talent a scene from "Cinna," and was greatly applauded. It was then that the hostess said to her, introducing Madame W——,

"This lady is Madame Mélanie Waldor, one of our poetical glories; she is the friend of a woman of great talent, who, though on her death-bed, has written some exquisite lines in your honor. Madame Waldor will read them to you."

Mademoiselle Rachel did not answer a word, or give the least token even of acquiescence.

Madame Waldor then read in a tone of great emotion her friend's lines; they were full of noble sentiments, and spoke the most graceful praise. Mademoiselle Rachel uttered no word of gratitude, made no sign of courteous acknowledgment. She maintained the same immovable, stiff silence. Had she been deaf, dumb, and blind, she could not have appeared more insensible to this touching homage sent to her from the brink of the grave. The guests looked at each other in astonishment. Madame Waldor turned abruptly away.

"That little girl," said she, aloud to Madame de Gasparin, with her rough Breton frankness, careless of being overheard, "that little girl has received of Heaven a great gift, but with it she has neither heart nor brains."

Madame Waldor subsequently met Mademoiselle Rachel at the houses of Madame de Récamier and other persons of distinction where fashion had introduced the actress, but she never saw reason to change her opinion.

Among the charges brought against Rachel even at this early period of her career was that of lacking tenderness, feminine softness. To this her partisans reply that she possesses both in an eminent degree, but that she lacks the faculty of expressing them from the very fact that her voice is so well suited to the utterance of violent passions. Neither has she the gift of tears, and of this deficiency she is herself fully aware; we can not call forth the tears of others unless we can ourselves weep, or at least are deeply moved. In proof that she had no real feeling, and that her exquisite acting was the result of quick perception and earnest study, it was urged that when she came off the stage her pulse remained perfectly natural, her skin cool, her voice calm, even though she had just exhibited the utmost extremes of mental agony on the boards. This assertion, however, is not correct. Whatever the degree of feeling Mademoiselle Rachel may possess, the above allegations as to the lack of external tokens of it are false. When playing some of her arduous *rôles*, she was covered with perspiration even in the depth of winter. After the utterance of the terrific imprecations of *Camille*, she used to remain several minutes gasping for breath, her eyes seeming to withdraw into their orbits, and her lips assuming a violet hue. A con-

sequence of this fearful excitement in one of her delicacy of constitution was the illness that necessitated her long sojourn in Egypt. That this overwrought state may at times have been somewhat exaggerated for the sake of effect is very probable; at any rate, after the most laborious scenes, such as those of fourth and fifth acts, she frequently fell fainting in the arms of her mother and her maid, who were always waiting for her behind the scenes.

## CHAPTER VIII.

### 1840.

Alarming Incident. — Three Plays revived this year: "Nicomede," "Polyeucte," and "Marie Stuart"—Benefit of Mademoiselle Thénard at Versailles.—Why Racine is generally preferred to Corneille. —Mademoiselle Rachel as Pauline.—Commences her Tour through the Provinces. — Début at Rouen. — Letter to the Manager. — The Medallion of "my second Father."—Success at Lyons, &c., &c.— Reappearance at the Théâtre Français.—Indifference of the Public for the classical Drama.—Artistic Selfishness.

The year 1840 was ushered in in rather an alarming manner for Mademoiselle Rachel, who was then residing in the Passage Vérot Dodat. She was roused from her sleep at four o'clock in the morning of the 1st of January by the blazing and crackling of the bed-room floor. However, the fire, which had originated in one of the shops of the firm of Aubert, on the first floor, then filled with albums, portfolios, and other combustibles for New Year presents, was soon got under, and little damage was done.

On the 22d of February Mademoiselle Rachel played in Versailles. This was the first time she had acted out of Paris. The play was "Cinna," and it was given for the benefit of Madame Thénard, who always performed the part of *confidante* to all the tragic characters of Mademoiselle Rachel, giving her the cue by her ready replies, and receiving her maternally in her arms at the moment of the catastrophe.

A little incident, characteristic of the tragédienne's proneness to make promises which she afterward regretted and made no scruple of breaking, occurred on the occasion of this trip to

Versailles. She had invited three or four friends to accompany her, and as an inducement to get them to go so far on a very cold night to see "Cinna" for the twentieth time, she promised to give them a snug little supper on their return to Paris.

After the play, the party set out in a hackney-coach as old as the man who drove it, and his age might be judged by the fact that he had belonged to the household of the Count de Provence, who had sent him to the King of Spain in the year 1791, before the princes emigrated; the gait of the horses seemed to prove them contemporaries of the coachman. The night was terribly cold, and the party was two hours reaching Paris. The guests' expectation of the good supper that was to recruit their spirits after the fatigue of the journey bore it patiently. Great then was their dismay when, on arriving at the gates of the Passage Vérot Dodat, Rachel having whispered to her mother as they alighted, the old lady, turning to their frozen and starved companions, dismissed them with "*Au revoir, Messieurs, I think we shall all sleep soundly.*" Rachel was subsequently so known among her comrades for inviting people to dinners and suppers she did not give them that it was seldom they were deceived into believing her.

So violent was the reaction against her at this period among the critics, that on the occasion of her playing in "Mithridates" at the Odéon on the 18th of April, the only notice taken of her by Jules Janin, her quondam admirer, was the careless remark that she *had appeared in one of her three characters.* The play was for the benefit of Faure, the old actor; the house was very thinly filled.

On the 9th of April the play of "Nicomede" was revived for her. *Laodice* was taken little notice of. The public was impatient for the long-announced part of *Pauline* in "Polyeucte." In general, however, Racine is preferred to Corneille. The preference is readily explained. Corneille personifies the genius of antiquity, and is the worthy rival of Shakspeare and Calderon. But the themes of his tragedies have, except under peculiar circumstances, lost much of their interest at the present day. Politics, religion, national honor, inspired the austere muse of Corneille; hence his plays produce the greatest sensation in times of war or of revolution.

Love, on the contrary, is the chief subject of Racine's master-pieces, and gives them an interest which is of all ages and all nations.

Though a religious feeling is indispensable for the just appreciation of "Polyeucte," others are equally excited. Neither the interests of religion nor the fate of empires are here at stake; the theme, based on the devotion of an enthusiastic man, the struggles in the heart of a woman divided between love and pity, and the respectful passion of a lover who vainly endeavors to save his rival, reach the heart of every spectator.

"Polyeucte" was revived on the 15th of May. This fine tragedy had not been on the stage for twenty-two years, and even before the death of Talma it had been thought impossible to act it at the Théâtre Français, so difficult is the part of its heroine, in whom are personified in all their purity the noblest passions of the human heart: love, duty, faith, and enthusiasm. While the various feelings and passions are indicated and distinguished by subtle and delicate shades, its sentiments are within the strict limits of good sense. Heroism itself, based on stern reason, is here calm, deliberate, and subdued; there are no sudden transports, no fiery impulses, no bursts of passion, no ironical taunts; in this high soul pride itself has no place. But, because the character is not violent, it by no means follows that it is tame, and when Mademoiselle Rachel first acted the part she showed no comprehension of the nice distinctions that constitute its chief charm. The *rôle* of *Pauline* combines two apparently discordant elements; the heroine is, in fact, half pagan and half Christian. She belongs at once to the gods of the Capitol and to the God of the Christians. The part of this sainted young heathen demands an innocent, chaste, and pure young soul; infinite ease, grace, and repose of manner. The noble young maiden, whose heart is so free from guile that she has no motive for concealment, utters unhesitatingly every thought, steps with the unswerving boldness of innocence, is frank, loyal, and free even with *Severe*, though she reciprocates his love, and meets him after a year's absence as though they had been parted but a few hours. In her delineation Mademoiselle Rachel erred sadly. She spoke the part with her usual clear, correct, impressive

intonation, but with the same inflections from beginning to end; the same deep, sepulchral tones, whether addressing her father, her lover, or her husband, giving it an intolerable sameness, while her gestures expressed a timid hesitancy denoting fear, and destitute of dignity. For girlish grace she substituted the stern demeanor of a Roman matron, folding her robe about her with the severe gesture and look of one called upon to resist a seducer. In all probability, the actress was really afraid of the numberless difficulties this *rôle* presents, and sought to avoid them by maintaining a uniform, even delivery, compelling the actors who surrounded her to adopt a species of slow under-tone and subdued action, imparting not only to the part of *Pauline*, but to the whole play, a monotony that produced on the audience something like *ennui*. The result was that the admirable fourth act, so full of thrilling emotion, and in which is the finest moment of *Pauline's* existence, produced little effect. In the famous passage, "*Je crois, je suis Chretienne!*" Mademoiselle Rachel redeemed her credit, and found a spark of the spirit of inspiration that had rendered her so successful on former occasions. Her eye, till then so leaden, suddenly quickened into life; her hitherto unmoved brow seemed to expand, her hands were loosened, her prisoned voice came forth boldly, energetically. With all due respect for the learned men who had undertaken to make a Roman convert to Christianity of the daughter of Israel, it must be owned that their lessons had availed little. It was only when the subject seemed to require the inspiration of the faith which she lacked that their unbelieving pupil really succeeded in it. Surely the Jewish maiden could not understand the terrible struggles of *Pauline*, far less the miracle of *Grace* which has been the subject of discussion with the most learned doctors of the Church, so little had the reality of feeling to do with its expression from her lips.

It was in June of this year that Rachel, or rather her father in her name, consented to go through the Departments. Every proposal to do so had hitherto been declined, the sum offered not satisfying the rapacious old man. The remuneration having at length been deemed sufficiently high, Rachel set out for Rouen. Much stress was laid by the press on the choice made

of this town, the birth-place of Corneille, for her *début* in the provinces, and her announcement that she would delay her first appearance for two days in order that she might make it on the sixth, the anniversary of his birth. The following letter was quoted in all the papers:

"Monsieur,—It is true that a slight indisposition prevents my performing to-morrow (Thursday, 4th of June), but I own also that a far more powerful motive—a sacred duty, in fact —induces me to postpone doing so. The 6th is the anniversary of the birth of the great Corneille, and I would wish to commence my performances on that day. The motive for the delay is surely too praiseworthy to admit of any objection being made. I remain, &c., &c., Rachel.

"To Monsieur Nicolo,* Manager of the Théâtre des Arts in Rouen."

The *parterre* of Rouen has always been the most celebrated for its severe and unbiased judgments on the merits of artists of all provincial theatres. It refuses to be guided by success won in the capital, and boasts of having hissed Talma himself in his youth. The homage paid by the actress to the genius of whom the Rouennais are justly proud could not fail to produce a favorable impression, and her advisers were good judges. How far, however, the feeling expressed by Mademoiselle Rachel was genuine, the following little anecdote will show.

A person as yet unacquainted with the true source of Mademoiselle Rachel's enthusiasm, hearing her speak in such glowing terms of him she was wont to call her *second father*, presented her with a superb medallion of Corneille. The gift was received with becoming gratitude, kissed with fervent raptures, and the donor assured it would never, *never* be parted with.

Some few days after, the credulous gentleman being on a visit to Mr. D——, the celebrated dramatist, mentioned the pleasure he had in presenting the medallion, and the *filial* gratitude expressed on the occasion. Mr. D——, who was then a country neighbor of the celebrated *artiste*, smilingly remarked that it would not be very difficult to obtain this pre-

* This gentleman was a brother of the famous composer of that name.

cious *souvenir*. The assertion being indignantly received, Mr. D—— continued: "Nay, I'll wager any amount I'll show it you within a month—a week—a day—two hours; and," added Mr. D——, taking a small parcel from a drawer, "do not be too savage, my artless friend, here is the never-to-be-parted-with medallion!"

Mademoiselle Rachel's filial gratitude had not resisted the temptation to dispose of it where it probably brought her in a larger interest than when in her own possession.

The little farce of respect to the memory of him who, while living on a pension of two thousand francs, wrote the masterpieces that have given millions to Mademoiselle Rachel, was very successful; the public of Rouen repaid in praise and more solid coin the trouble taken to please it.

In Lyons, enthusiasm was at its height; the municipality presented her with a gold crown valued at 7000 francs. The continuation of her tour was equally satisfactory.

It was during this visit to Lyons that the following interesting incident is said to have taken place. On one of the off-nights, having dressed very plainly, the young actress, accompanied by a male friend, set out to visit the different parts of the city she had been in the habit of frequenting when she and her sister Sarah were obliged each night to bring home a certain amount of small coin. A coffee-house in the vicinity of Le Théâtre Célestins, one of the minor theatres, was a favorite place of resort with the poor children. On arriving here the emotion of Rachel was very great. Having entered with her companion, they seated themselves at one of the little tables and ordered some refreshment; but she could touch nothing; her eyes were filled with tears, and, finding herself recognized, she hastened home. While on the stage the next evening, she could not help contrasting the present with the past, and reflecting on the difference time had made in the fortunes of the child who once, in that very town, had recited her little fables to careless ears for the sake of a few sous, doled out more from a feeling of charity than as a reward to repay the pleasure she had imparted, and the young girl to whom a fashionable audience was now listening with rapt attention, and on whom monarchs hastened to lavish rich gifts.

Rachel had no false pride on the subject of her early penury, and never hesitated to speak of it when the subject was introduced. The person who had kept the *café* where the little street-performers were wont to exercise their talents having retired from business and gone to live in Paris, called upon Rachel, who received her with open arms.

In a *feuilleton* of the "Constitutionnel," we find, *àpropos* of the contrasts she sometimes made between the past and the present, the following, related by Mr. Fiorentino:

"At a concert given at the Salle Herz for some charity, the celebrated *tragédienne* had played in her *toilette de ville* two scenes from 'Phedre,' and had been recalled thrice by the delighted audience. Several of the lady patronesses begged she would undertake with them the office of *quêteuse* for the benefit of the poor orphans for whom she had just contributed the aid of her talent. Mademoiselle Rachel then did me the honor to take my arm. The audience was composed of the *élite* of Parisian society, and the velvet bag gracefully presented by the *artiste* was soon filled. She merrily emptied it into my hat each time, saying to the admirers who hastened to present their offering,

"'Messieurs, I can not accept less than a louis.'

"The collection amounted to no less than 3000 francs, and the *quêteuse* appeared highly delighted with her success; but, as we returned home, her countenance suddenly assumed a sad expression:

"'Such,' said she, 'is the vanity of men; they willingly give me a louis now I am rich and celebrated; they refused to give me two sous when I was a poor child dying of hunger!'"

At the expiration of her *congé* Mademoiselle Rachel reappeared at the Théâtre Français on the 14th of September. She was seldom required to play during the autumn of this year. Mademoiselle Mars was about to retire from the stage, and the desire to enjoy the privilege of seeing this great actress, filling the house every time she was announced, the managers took advantage of it to reserve Mademoiselle Rachel.

Some efforts were, however, made to resuscitate the classic drama, and to this end, as Joanny was getting old, the *débûts*

of Guyon were much encouraged. The opinions, or rather the laments of the critics during the last four months of 1840 are exceedingly curious, and afford a triumphant refutation to the assertions of those who complain that the Americans lacked taste for the tragic master-pieces imported by Rachel into the States sixteen years later. *Certes*, if the pecuniary results of her voyage did not satisfy her insatiate brother, Raphael, the Americans were not to blame; they could hardly be expected to exhibit more warmth in honor of the French classic drama than the *élite* of Paris. The public cared so little for the play itself, that whenever the favorite actress or actor was not on the stage, every back was turned to it, and conversation was resumed as though nothing was being said on the boards. Some excuse might be found for this indifference in the careless manner in which the tragedies were got up; the actors in the secondary parts were perfect sticks, who seemed in a great hurry to get rid of what they had to say, no matter how, and rush off the stage; the accessories were mean to the last degree; dresses, &c., &c., the merest trumpery.

Rachel herself contributed no little to disgust the public with every other actor. Like all stars, she cared for no one else, and endeavored to concentrate on herself the attention of the public to the exclusion of all others. She never played to her fellow-actors on the stage, nor for the sake of bringing into relief the beauties of the play. She kept aloof as much as possible from her companions, never seemed to answer *them* when the scene required it, or to hear them when it was their turn to reply to her. She showed no interest whatever in what was going on about her, but waited until it was her turn to speak, certain to draw upon herself the undivided attention of the audience. This utter indifference to the *business* of the stage occasioned the most ridiculous oversights in the most difficult scenes, disheartened the other actors, and completely effected her purpose, which was the same throughout her career, viz., to drive from the stage any person likely to share with her the favor of the public.

On the 22d of December the "Marie Stuart" of Le Brun was revived, with Mademoiselle Rachel as the heroine. Whoever has read the drama will readily perceive the points in

which the precocious actress failed, at least on her first attempt.

This problem of history, the mystery of the heart, the solution of which has been vainly sought by each successive generation with never-failing interest, has been divined by one man only. Of the three dramatists, German, Italian, and French, who have ventured to touch the lovely head with its fatal triple crown and its still more fatal coronet of beauty, laid low by the headsman, the first alone has proved worthy to do so. Schiller sought in his own poetical soul, as well as in the contradictory pages of history, the elements of the beautiful being he evoked from the obscurity of past ages. He has depicted with admirable skill the hostile meeting of the two great female contemporaries, the contest between power and beauty—between strength and weakness—between possession and right—the fatal game in which ambition, love, jealousy, and pride shuffled the cards, and life was the forfeit. Political motives were but secondary incentives to the murder of the anointed victim ; wounded self-love and irritated vanity sharpened the axe. Schiller well knew a woman only would have invented the torture of depriving her rival of a mirror. The image it reflected was too lovely ; it might prove a compensation to all the rigors of fortune, and diminish the horrors of captivity. And, again, the cool ferocity with which the *gentle* Mary retaliates on her jailer, lacerating her very heart-strings with those same light, fairy fingers of hers, more cruel than the talons of an eagle. The mingled scorn, anger, contempt, and rage, contained in her letter to Elizabeth that has come down to us, in which she alludes to her real or supposed malformation, infirmities, and moral defects, are summed up with consummate skill in the magnificent scene of the third act, when the exasperated captive, forgetful or careless that she is in the lioness's den, taunts the monster with her own and her mother's iniquities. Perhaps, withal, the drama falls short of history here, for the reproaches that *adultery reigns over the people of England, and that hypocrisy was its sovereign*, were less offensive to the queen than was the recorded use of the *fistula in the leg* to the woman.

We have all admired the exquisite lines in which poor

Marie pours forth her soul when she is permitted, like a bird with a string round its foot, to roam for a moment in apparent freedom.

Faithfully has the German poet followed history, step by step, guessing what the veil of time concealed, and giving new life to those long-buried human passions. One personage, it were to be hoped, was of his own invention, did not his recorded deeds too plainly prove that such a miscreant had existed: a wretch divided between love (?) and ambition—between the royal murderess and her no less regal victim, who, during five acts, is the servile courtier, the cringing *laquais*, the lover of the daughter of Anna Boleyn, a traitor to two queens, affecting to wish to save Mary of Scotland and counseling her murder, assisting at its perpetration and reporting its details to his bloody mistress, Elizabeth of England! The dramatist has given the true colors of the notorious Earl of Leicester, whom history shows us charged at home with the murder of two wives—on the field of battle with utter incapacity—at court with treason. The love of Mary for this man is an incredible invention, but that he became one of her most violent persecutors in revenge for her having contemptuously rejected his homage is too true.

Such were the materials that Schiller had at his disposal, and well did he use them. The French poet has given but a meagre copy, in which almost every beauty of the original is lost.

In the *rôle* of "Marie Stuart" Rachel was not successful on her first attempt, though she subsequently greatly improved it. The failure may, in a great measure, be attributed to her ignorance of history, and, consequently, of the character, feelings, and manners of the personage she represented, of the age in which she lived, and of the circumstances in which she was placed. It was probably with a view that she should learn these indispensable points that M. de Rémusat presented Mademoiselle Rachel with a magnificent copy of the History of Scotland. On this occasion it was very evident she had not yet opened its gilded pages. The advantage derived from the study of history has been appreciated by all great actors. Talma studied Tacitus in the morning and acted his heroes in the

evening. Lekain was an assiduous student of the ancients. Larozelière used to relate that, calling one morning on Madame Dunénil, he found her in her garden, sitting by a well, reading Suetonius, and meditating on the character of Agrippina.

Mademoiselle Rachel understood instinctively the violent passions of the imprisoned, vexed, and *worried* Mary; she could not as readily understand the effect of religion on that tempest-tossed soul—the calm, the resignation that succeeds to the hurricane.

She could depict with startling truth the maddened queen retaliating with usury the insults heaped upon her, and dragging into the dust even the memory of her tormentor's mother, but beyond that rage and that vengeance she saw nothing. She could bear with conscious pride the weight of that triple crown, but she could not discern the block to which she was hastening—that block to which she must soon bend with the dignity of a queen, but also with the resignation of a Christian and a martyr!

When the canopy, the innocent emblem of sovereignty, is torn from Mary's chair, Rachel had not the slightest idea of the sublime effort with which the queen, subduing her indignation, says, "Place the crucifix here, Melvil, and let us kneel!" Mary herself was twenty years learning the difficult lesson of humility; it cost Mademoiselle Rachel fourteen years of study to enable her to present this, the fairest side of the picture.

That Mademoiselle Rachel had not sufficiently weighed the sense of the words she uttered was evident in what to some may appear a slight mistake. A good actor, however, is aware of the importance of accessories in keeping up scenic illusion. The unfortunate victim of female tyranny who so bitterly complains of being imprisoned in a dungeon, deprived of rank, power, friends, attendance, and reduced to the veriest want—

> "Dans les murs d'un cachot vous m'avez enfermée
> Dépouillée à la fois de toutes les grandeurs,
> Sans secours, sans amis, presque sans serviteurs
> Au plus vil dénuement dans ma prison réduite"—

this forlorn lady is dressed in a style of gorgeous magnificence; her bodice is stiff with jewels, and some twenty rows

of pearl encircle her neck! This rich dress was accurate as to the fashion of the age, but it was not true to the situation. In the first place, it quite eclipsed that of Queen Elizabeth. It was not probable that the rival who deprived Mary of a mirror would have allowed her to keep such rich attire. The fine dresses of the woman were of course taken from her on the same principle that the sword of an imprisoned man is not left to him. They were her weapons, and as Mary's chief crime was her beauty, Elizabeth was the less likely to forget this precaution. Moreover, this splendor renders Mary less interesting. So beautifully dressed a woman is surely not to be pitied. One might feel resigned to having one's head cut off, but to be obliged to wear an unbecoming cap would indeed be cruel. Mary might forgive the theft of her crown, never that of her dresses!

"Marie Stuart" did little toward consolidating the hold of Mademoiselle Rachel on public opinion. People still remembered the intense feeling with which Mademoiselle Duchesnois had played the same part, and the comparison was not favorable to her successor.

---

## CHAPTER IX.

### 1841.

Engagement for one Year signed with the Théâtre Français.—Father and Teacher.—*Débûts* in England.—Victoria to Mademoiselle Rachel.—Andromaque mistaken for Hermione.—Rachel at Windsor.—Return to Paris.—Increasing Splendors.—Rachel a thorough Cosmopolitan.—A Rival!—Contest for the scenic Sceptre: "Marie Stuart."—Rachel and Elizabeth.—Maxime.—Phèdre keeping furnished Lodgings and a *Table d'hôte.*

It has been seen that "Marie Stuart" added nothing then to the reputation of Mademoiselle Rachel. While her partisans still warmly applauded all she did, it was evident that curiosity was no longer excited and enthusiasm had cooled.

The actress herself was much too anxious to secure the renewal of her engagement on such terms as she, or rather her father, deemed she could safely exact to study new parts this

year. 60,000 francs per annum and three months' *conge* were the terms she hesitated to accept—that is, over 90,000 francs for one year*—the amount paid to Monsieur Guizot to govern the most ungovernable nation on earth!

In the first week of April, however, the engagement was accepted and the treaty for one year signed on the above terms; furthermore, it was agreed that at the close of the year Mademoiselle Rachel should be received *sociétaire*, with a *full share* and a fixed salary of 42,000 francs.

Mademoiselle Rachel, in the mean while, had enough to do to please her domestic advisers. Her life was no easy one in this respect. Every scene she studied was learned with the accompaniment of another rather more annoying in its unpoetical reality to the poor girl. The following may be taken as a specimen:

The word *toujours*, for instance, is to be spoken in Mademoiselle Rachel's *rôle*. M. Sanson advises his pupil to utter it with head erect, loud voice, and firm, resolute tone.

"Thus, raising your head, say 'Toujours.'"

M. Felix, who is present, interposes:

"No, that's not the way; you must say it mildly—with great feeling; thus, casting your eyes to heaven, Tou—jours."

M. Sanson (annoyed): "It must be said authoritatively."

M. Felix (getting obstinate): "It must be spoken tenderly—pathetically."

M. Sanson (waxing testy): "I am her teacher, and must not be interfered with."

M. Felix (quite furious): "I am her father, and must be obeyed."

Mademoiselle Rachel, quite bewildered, says the fatal word *toujours*, no matter how. M. Sanson thinks he discerns the intonation suggested by Father Felix, and becomes indignant:

"You are an ingrate! A pupil who is indebted to me for her success! I've done with you; adieu."

Mademoiselle Rachel, dismayed at having offended her pro-

* 42,000 francs out of the 60,000 were paid her out of the subsidy given by the state; the remainder was the sum her full share as *sociétaire* would bring. It was supposed her *congés* gave over 30,000 francs yearly.

fessor, without whom she can not get along, says *toujours* as he wished she should. There is no misunderstanding her this time, and Father Felix, in his turn, flies into a passion:

"You unnatural child! You rebellious daughter!" &c., &c.

Mademoiselle Rachel bursts into tears, and the lesson ends here, for the pupil's sobs prevent her saying *toujours* in any way.

The above, and other similar little dialogues were reported at the time, much to the amusement of the public, and certainly, if not true to the letter, were very true to the tempers and habits of the personages.

That the father contributed by his judicious advice to the success of Rachel is well known. Entirely ignorant of all rules, having perhaps never seen good acting—at least not good *French actors*—before his arrival in Paris, he possessed in the highest degree instinctive dramatic knowledge. Whenever his daughter (in the early part of her career) went to take her lesson, he accompanied her, that he might make her repeat and study at home, which she always did with his assistance. For keen perception of what was right or wrong, where strength, passion, &c., were required, no teacher surpassed him. Had he studied the profession in his youth, he would have attained high excellence in the art.

In order to stimulate the flagging interest of the Parisian public, it was thought advisable to accept the proposal made by Lumley, of her majesty's Theatre, to play there one month. Nothing that could give *éclat* to her reception was omitted, and the result was that desired. The new idol was greeted with fanatical admiration. In London she again met the distinguished English to whom she had been introduced in the *salons* of Paris. She was invited into the most aristocratic circles, at Lord Palmerston's, Lady Jersey's, &c. She was every where accompanied by her father and her sister Sarah. The perfect tact of the old man stood him in lieu of the qualities he lacked, and, besides, the daughter made the father acceptable.

As for Rachel, her unaffected and even dignified simplicity, her modesty, and the perfect decorum of her conduct, made her a great favorite with the fastidious English aristocracy.

The aunts of the queen condescended to notice her, and she was invited to Windsor, and presented by the Duchess of Kent to her majesty, who received her very graciously. The usual royal gift was on this occasion a bracelet composed of two wreathed serpents with diamond heads, and bore, graven on the inside, a few words. Those words were subsequently commented on in a variety of ways. It was said, and even reported in the public prints, that the inscription was this: *Victoria to Rachel.* The truth was, it stood thus: *Victoria to Mademoiselle Rachel;* the difference of the omission of a single word making an immense one in the sense.

But it was neither the inscription nor the honor the gift brought that occupied the attention of the recipient; her mind was set on more substantial advantages. She has herself owned that her first impulse was to *feel* the *weight* of the bracelet, and thence estimate its *metallic* value!

It was on this occasion that the actress appearing to suffer from cold, the Duchess of Kent is said to have covered her shoulders with a magnificent yellow Indian shawl of her own. This shawl was afterward taken possession of by mother Felix, on whose shoulders, had it been gifted with consciousness, the magnificent production of the Indian looms must have been rather astonished to find itself.

It was on the 14th of May that Mademoiselle Rachel made her *début* at her majesty's Theatre. A company of French actors attended her from Paris, and the first tragedy given was "Andromaque." A rather amusing mistake was made this evening by the London audience, who had never yet seen the great French actress, but were willing to accept the judgment of the Continent *sur parole.* The person who acted the first tragic parts with Rachel was gifted by nature with a very fine person, but was an actress of secondary capacity. She played *Andromaque*, and appeared in the third scene of the first act, whereas Rachel, as *Hermione*, did not come on until the first scene of the second act. The audience, who were anxiously awaiting the entrance of Rachel, seeing this fine-looking *Andromaque*, took it for granted that this was the phenomenon of the day, and greeted her with thunders that quite bewildered Mademoiselle Larcher, who was unaccustomed to

such a reception. The ovation was prolonged to the close of the first act, and when the real object of this enthusiasm came on, but few hands were raised to welcome her. The truth was, however, soon rumored, and the homage transferred to its legitimate object.

Every movement of Mademoiselle Rachel was duly chronicled by the press. An indisposition with which she was seized at a *soirée* of Lady Cardigan's on the 1st of June was reported with extravagant lamentations, and her recovery with as extravagant joy. Her reappearance on the 8th of June was greeted as though she had escaped from the tomb. The queen and queen-dowager were present.

On the 14th of June Mademoiselle Rachel arrived at the Castle Hotel in Windsor, where apartments had been prepared for her. She had come in order to assist at a *fête* given by the queen, the particulars of which were reported in the papers of the day. A splendid banquet, to which were invited one hundred and two guests, preceded the performances. Among the superb plate of the crown displayed were the Indian trophies the English nation has lately paid for so dearly; the magnificent tiger's head, known as the footstool of Tippoo Saïb, the splendid peacock adorned with precious stones of immense value, and also the shield of Achilles. On the right and left of the immense buffet on which this wealth of nations was displayed hung the blue banners of Tippoo Saïb, adorned with pearls and jewels of great value.

The theatrical and musical entertainment of the evening was presented in the following order:

I.
First act of "Bajazet."
Overture of Count d'Egmont.

II.
Third act of "Marie Stuart."
March of Harold.

III.
Fourth act of "Andromaque."
Symphony of Mozart.
God save the queen!

During Mademoiselle Rachel's stay in London, negotiations

were set on foot for an engagement to play in Spain, but they were not carried through.

Mademoiselle Rachel took her leave of a London audience on the 20th of July, in the part of *Camille*. Every formula of praise was exhausted by the press on this occasion, as on the preceding ones. According to the *on dits* of the day, her triumph had been extended to the heart of the manager, who is said to have offered her his hand. If the offer was made it was not accepted, and Mademoiselle Rachel left England on her way to Bordeaux on the 22d of July, and arrived in that city on the 1st of August.

We have hitherto followed Mademoiselle Rachel more especially in her professional career; we have now before us a more arduous task; we are to speak of her as the woman in her social sphere: a delicate subject at all times, since it compels us to invade the sanctuary of private life, and reveal its mysteries to a prying public, but more especially so in the present case.

We will endeavor to fulfill this task, nothing extenuating, nor setting down aught in malice, in as far as it is consistent with conscientious biography to report the words and actions of its subject. But there are grounds it is not our province to touch upon; grounds that are beyond the limits of the morbid curiosity that eagerly seeks to find in every great work that issues from the Divine hand the contaminating touch of the genius of evil; grounds where the truth is too obscure to be distinguished from fable, and where, even if known, it would afford no better clew to character, would convey no lesson, prevent no fall. If, then, those who delight in the scandalous revelations of the foibles of poor human nature have taken up this book with the hope of finding in it a detailed account of the numerous *liaisons* attributed, whether justly or not, to this celebrated woman, and the innumerable scandalous anecdotes that have been circulated with regard to her and her supposed admirers, we warn them they had better throw it down at once, as nothing so piquant seasons its matter-of-fact pages. Whatever is necessary to convey an idea of the character, temper, and inclinations, especially in all that has any connection with her talent as an actress, we are bound to offer to the reader so far

as we have it in our power; farther, we have nothing to add from the garrulous *chronique scandaleuse* of the day.

On her return from London and Bordeaux, where, in addition to the golden harvests she had reaped, her stay had been marked daily by rich tokens of individual admiration, the apartment in the Passage Vérot Dodat could no longer accord with her position. A handsome apartment, Rue du Luxembourg, near the Tuileries, was taken, and furnished richly. Here Rachel had a suite of rooms to herself, separated from those occupied by the rest of the family, the apartment being divided by the landing-place, and each side having a *salon*, bed-rooms, &c. The young girls, Rebecca and Leah, were placed in boarding-schools. It was while residing in this apartment that Rachel first owned a carriage; it was the gift of a co-religionist, M. Cremieux, a brother of the celebrated advocate and minister of the provisional government.

The success of Rachel abroad seemed a triumphant refutation of the criticisms of the fault-finders at home. The enthusiasm of her audiences had loaded her with crowns, poetical effusions, and—what to her was most welcome of all—money. In these visits to foreign countries and departmental tours the vanity of the woman and the avarice of the Jewess were fully gratified, while the *artiste* had no criticisms to dread. In Paris praise was lavishly awarded when deserved, but impartial and severe criticism visited every error, and held up in glaring colors every false step, every failure. The capital of good taste, the admitted arbitress of merit, considers her slightest commendations equal to all the more lightly-bestowed praise of less competent judges, and when she has adopted a child of genius, she is jealously exacting, and permits of no slight to herself or preference being shown for other towns. Throughout the whole of her career Rachel proved herself a thorough cosmopolitan; she went, she staid, where she was paid most. In her heart there appeared to be no place for gratitude; her idol was gold, and whenever that lure was held out she hastened to grasp it, regardless of all previous claims upon her services.

The result of this conduct was that the Parisians lost all affection for her, and that, after every absence, it required all

her talent and an extraordinary degree of exertion on her part to reconquer her place. Talma and Mademoiselle Mars, those darlings of the Parisian public, never sacrificed their duties at the Théâtre Français to any offer made them elsewhere. Whatever the advantages to be reaped abroad, they returned faithfully at the appointed time, and never failed to show themselves prouder of the favor of the capital than of that of any potentate. Thus it was that when, after every *congé*, they reappeared on the Parisian stage, the delight of the audience was manifested in the most enthusiastic manner. When Rachel reappeared at long intervals after her erratic flights and capricious fits of sullenness, she was received with stern, cold silence.

Mademoiselle Rachel experienced this for the first time on her return to Paris this year. There was, moreover, something far more to be dreaded; there was a rival. The management, whether to lower the presumption, and consequently the claims of the reigning star, or with a view of securing a second resource in case the first should fail, had brought out a competitor. Among the zealous supporters of the *débutante* was Jules Janin, the once enthusiastic partisan of Rachel. The enthusiasm which the new object of his admiration excited found vent in the most rhapsodical tirades that ever fell from his pen.

The *rôle* attempted by the daring candidate was the most arduous, perhaps, in the whole classic *repertoire*, the masterpiece of Racine, one that Rachel had not yet dared to act, that she only attempted three years afterward, and only succeeded in ten years later—*Phèdre*. In this god-descended and goddess-cursed queen every human passion is carried beyond human strength; she revolves in a fiery sphere incomprehensible to orderly every-day people. In that tortured heart there is a turmoil of wild, contradictory elements striving for the mastery such as no mere earth-born creature could withstand. Quenchless love and poignant grief, hope and despair in their most phrensied extremes, rend the stronghold of vitality, till, weary of the strife, the vexed soul rushes into eternity. Yet, repulsive as would seem the incestuous step-dame, the adulterous wife, whose perjured breath stirs the lowest depths of

hell, and evokes the demons of murder and ruin, the great, the indispensable condition of the *rôle* is that our pity be excited for this victim of the implacable destiny of antiquity. We are to forget the murdered son; neither his innocence nor his terrible death, to narrate which the poet has exhausted the rich treasures of his art, should absorb our interest; our sympathy—our pity should centre in the murderess.

This character, then, which consummate actresses had spent years in learning, and attempted with fear and trepidation, was confided to a neophyte. Of the efforts made to sustain her, the following is a proof:

"This is, indeed, the *Phèdre* of Racine. The very sight of her reveals the woman who is courageous, energetic, and passionate beyond measure. * * * * She comes on the stage like a desperate creature; nothing dazzles, nothing stops her. What she is to say is there, in her head, in her soul; but she will say it according to the inspiration of the moment. If she says it as she should, so much the better. * * * * Mademoiselle Maxime has triumphed in this most arduous experiment. Her head is full of energy, her look of animation. She has a fine voice that no exertion wearies, ready tears, simple and natural gestures. *She* does not play with Racine's verses as a child does with a hoop; *she* does not endeavor to concentrate all the tragedy in herself, and exclude the actor who plays with her from the favor of the public—that favor which is his sun; on the contrary, she *listens* well; she assists the efforts of those around her; she does not declaim, she acts. * * * We have found a *Phèdre* at last. Go and see her; go and applaud her; go and defend her. She is alone, without support, without coterie, without protection, left to her own true instincts, &c., &c."

For some months Jules Janin endeavored to support this rival to Mademoiselle Rachel, forgetting, while he instituted comparisons so insulting to his quondam idol, that he insulted his own former judgments, and invalidated any future ones he might make.

In October Mademoiselle Rachel reappeared in the *rôle* of *Camille*. She was received, as we have already said, without the slightest token of favor, and commenced her part amid

icy silence. The public seemed to say, "You may leave us if it pleases you, but we may also forget you. Beware, for absence is always dangerous." The actress bent every nerve to the task of winning back her audience, and was finally recalled at the close of the fourth act, amid thunders of applause.

Among the reproaches addressed to the *tragédienne*, this reentrance at the close of the fourth act to be applauded by the public was one of the most just; but it might be with equal reason addressed to the audience who permitted so flagrant a violation of good taste. In England the fifth act was omitted, and the tragedy ended with the death of *Camille*. The insult to the author, the contempt shown to the other actors, was certainly not so gross in this case as when the play was continued after the resurrection of *Camille*. This resurrection destroys all illusion, and takes away all interest from the last act, and the result was that hardly any one staid to hear it. This affords a farther proof that the classic drama is dead in France, and that no one cares in reality for Corneille and Racine.

On the 25th of October the performance of "Marie Stuart" brought the two rivals before the public in the same play, and in characters that allowed each to vent openly all the stifled rage, indignation, and hatred to which their rivalry gave rise. The foes were brought face to face, and a seemingly fair field was given them to contend for the favor of the public. The original struggle for mastery between the real personages of history could hardly have been more desperate than the modern one between these two mock queens; each put forth all the power that nature and art had given her to crush the other and secure to herself the scenic sceptre. The passions that were roused, the emotions that were excited among their partisans were, in a narrow compass, no less fierce and violent than those of the drama. In comparison with the great contest recorded in history, this, in truth, was a tempest in a punch-bowl; yet each competitor felt that her prospects in life, her very existence, was staked upon the issue.

Every time poor Maxime appeared, one portion of the house maintained a disdainful silence, a tacit condemnation which

her own few but brave partisans retorted to the full whenever Rachel came on. Both camps anxiously awaited the decisive third act. It amply justified their solicitude. The silence that reigned throughout the house was almost oppressive. *Elizabeth*—Maxime—pale, disheartened, seeing too well the tide was against her, feeling instinctively she was doomed, knowing her incapacity to resist or escape the impending avalanche, trembled with impotent rage. Every word she uttered revealed the bitterness and grief of her burdened heart. *Marie Stuart*—Rachel—on her side, passive and motionless, accepted all the withering contumely heaped upon her; with bent head, folded arms, and steady, calm, glittering eye, she waited—waited patiently—but there was something so appalling, so deadly in the look, that a shudder went through the audience; every one felt that the patience was that of the tiger secure of his prey, who has noted the very place where his fangs will be thrust into the quivering flesh of the victim. When, at last, it was her turn to speak, the very ones who had expected the explosion were thunderstruck. No pen can render the phrensied passion, the terrific vehemence, the scorching indignation with which she poured forth her pent-up fury. Her voice, lately so weak and exhausted, strengthened by her imperious will, hurled forth anathemas that fell like sledge-hammers on the crushed Maxime, who, breathless, amazed, terrified beyond measure, gazed at her with wild eyes. The scene was magnificent, and beggars description. No one could have believed such meaning could be given to the pale, meagre, wishy-washy translation of Le Brun; no one ever suspected the strength, the fire contained in Rachel. Her irritated self-love had developed all her resources; she had attained every perfection save one, the most prized, most valuable—tears. True tenderness, real feeling, have their source in the heart; they do not spring from self-love and irritated vanity.

The defeat of Maxime was too complete to be denied, even by the critic who had so loudly proclaimed her superiority; but he palliated his want of judgment and softened her fall by alleging that the character was unsuited to her, as her chief gift was the power of expressing feeling, pathetic sentiment,

and the *rôle* of *Elizabeth* permitted nothing of the kind. Had she acted *Marie Stuart*, and Rachel *Elizabeth*, the exit would have been different. There might certainly have been a great deal of truth in saying that, had the *rôles* been reversed, Maxime would have been more in her element, and Rachel still in her own, but never could the former have made the scale incline on her side when matched with such an adversary.

Her triumph cost Mademoiselle Rachel an indisposition that prevented the repetition of this exciting scene.

All attempt at rivalry was at an end. Mademoiselle Maxime sank at once into insignificance, and, although she remained ten years on the stage, the public never took any especial notice of her. She is now keeping an *hotel garni*, Rue de la Michodière, in Paris. *Phèdre* lets furnished lodgings, with board if required.

---

## CHAPTER X.

### 1842.

The "Cid."—The Chimène of the French Stage; the Ximena of Ancient Spain and the Creation of Mademoiselle Rachel.—"Ariane."—La Champmeslé.—Mademoiselle Clairon.—Return to London.—Disappointment.—Success in Belgium.—30,000 Francs in eleven Nights.—Corneille's Anniversary a Failure.—Return to Paris.—"Frédégonde."

THREE revivals were presented during the course of this year by Mademoiselle Rachel: the "Cid" of Pierre Corneille, the "Ariane" of his brother, Thomas Corneille, and the "Frédégonde et Brunehaut" of Lemercier. The selection of all these tragedies could not have been more unfortunate; in the first instance, with regard to the want of proper preparation on the part of the actress; in the other instances, with regard to the plays themselves.

The "Cid" was given on the 19th of January. We have said elsewhere that Corneille's female characters were, with the exception of that of *Chiméne*, very inferior to his heroes. To find this exquisitely beautiful, passionate, and eloquent maid, this noble heart divided between love and duty, yet nev-

er for a moment sacrificing one to the other, uniting strength and gentleness, anger and forgiveness, pride and grief, the burning love of a woman, the thirst for vengeance of a Castilian daughter—this being, lovely as she is terrible, yet, whether in her extreme of grief or her extreme of rage, commanding respect and admiration, inspiring love and sympathy—to find this, the noblest creature ever created by the divine breath, Corneille had to seek in a heroic age, in a land of chivalry. The age of gallantry, the brilliant court of Louis XIV., its galaxy of lovely dames afforded no such model.

The cause of the quarrel between the two fathers that forms the basis of the plot is taken from the old ballads of the "Cid," the spirit of which has been so faithfully given in Southey's version.

"In those days arose Rodrigo of Bivar, who was a youth strong in arms and of good customs; and the people rejoiced in him, for he bestirred himself to protect the land from the Moors.

"At this time it came to pass that there was strife between the Lord of Gormaz and Diego Laynez, the father of Rodrigo; and the count insulted Diego and gave him a blow. Now Diego was a man in years, and his strength had passed from him so that he could not take vengeance; and he retired to his house, to dwell there in solitude and lament over his dishonor. And he took no pleasure in his food, neither could he sleep by night, nor would he lift his eyes up from the ground, nor stir out of his house, nor commune with his friends, but turned from them in silence, as if the breath of his dishonor would taint them. Rodrigo was yet but a youth, and the count was a mighty man in arms, and one who gave his voice first in the Cortes, and was held to be the best in war, and so powerful that he had a thousand friends among the mountains. Howbeit, all these things appeared as nothing to Rodrigo when he thought of the wrong done to his father, the first that had ever been offered to the blood of Lain Calvo. He asked nothing but justice of Heaven, and of man a fair field; and his father, seeing of how good heart he was, gave him his sword and his blessing. The sword had been the sword of Mudarra in former times; and when Rodrigo felt its cross

within his hands, he thought within himself that his arm was not weaker than Mudarra's. And he went out, and defied the count, and slew him, and smote off his head, and carried it home to his father. The old man was sitting at table, the food lying before him untasted, when Rodrigo returned, and pointing to the head that hung from his horse's collar dropping blood, he bade him look up, for there was the herb that would restore to him his appetite; the tongue, quoth he, which insulted you, is no longer a tongue, and the hand which wronged you is no longer a hand. And the old man arose and embraced his son, and placed him above him at the table, saying that he who brought him that head should be the head of the house of Lain Calvo."

Whatever Corneille added to the original text was true to the spirit, if not to the letter, and in all points conforming to the feelings, customs, and manners of the age and country. This splendid theme, dressed in his magnificent poetry, constitutes a drama that has no equal.

The character of the lovers, whatever may have been said to the contrary, has nothing that is false, too highly colored, or unnatural. Their feelings, words, and actions are perfectly in keeping with the times. A severe but judicious French critic of the beginning of this century, Geoffroy, errs sadly when he criticises the conduct of Chimène, who repairs to court in deep mourning to demand justice of the king. He says that neither honor nor duty required that a young girl, whose father had been killed, should ostentatiously display at court her mourning and her grief, and loudly demand the blood of the murderer. The king is aware of the combat, he knows the murderer, he is wise and just. Chimène may trust to him the case of punishing or forgiving. Geoffroy adds that his reflection is merely in a moral sense, not in a literary one, and that what is extravagant according to the laws of honesty and propriety is admirable in a dramatic and poetic sense; that the stranger the character of Chimène, the more it is brilliant and theatrical.

This is not the place to refute the opinions of Geoffroy as to the light in which he considers theatricals and their object, but the opinion of the conduct of Corneille's heroine proves

that the celebrated critic has never given much time to the study of the early history of nations. This clamorous demand for vengeance, carried to the foot of the throne, in all the pomp of woe, by the widow and children of the murdered, is so frequent in the annals of every European people that innumerable instances might be quoted. One in much later times, related by Monstrelet, will serve the present purpose. Speaking of the events that followed the murder of the Duke of Orleans, in 1407, by order of the Duke of Burgundy, the old chronicler says:

"On the tenth day of December, the Duchess of Orleans, widow to the late duke, with her youngest son John, and accompanied by the late Queen of England, now wife to her eldest son, set out for Paris. The King of Sicily, the Dukes of Berri and Bourbon, the Counts of Clermont and Vendôme, the Lord Charles d'Albret, constable of France, and many other great lords, went out of the town to meet her, attended by a number of people and horses, and thus escorted her to the Hotel de St. Pol, where the king resided. Being instantly admitted to an audience, she fell on her knees to the king, and made a pitiful complaint to him of the very inhuman murder of her lord and husband. The king, who at that time was in his sound senses, having lately recovered from his illness, raised her up with tears, and assured her he would comply with all her request, according to the opinion of his council.

* * * * * * * * * *

"On the Wednesday after St. Thomas's day, the Duchess of Orleans, accompanied by her youngest son, the Queen Dowager of England, her daughter-in-law, the Chancellor of Orleans, and others of her council, and many of the knights and esquires who had been of the household of the late duke, all clothed in black, came to the Hotel of St. Pol to have an audience of the king. She found there the King of Sicily, the Duke of Berri and Bourbon, the Chancellor of France, and several others, who, having demanded an audience for her of the king, instantly obtained it. She was led into the presence by the Count d'Alençon, and with many tears, and before all the princes, again supplicated the king that he would

do her justice to those who had traitorously murdered her lord and husband, the late Duke of Orleans.

"Upon this, the duchess, her son John, and the Queen Dowager of England, her daughter-in-law, cast themselves on their knees before the king, and with abundance of tears supplicated him to remember to do good justice on the perpetrators of the murder of his brother."

The chief merit of Corneille, and herein he proved himself superior even to Shakspeare, was, that he followed the model he had chosen in all its details of time and place, and never suffered an anachronism to destroy the scenic illusion. With heart and head full of the historic and legendary lore of Spain, he drew the portrait of a fitting mate for him who, to this day, has remained the representative of the extinct virtues of a past age—of a woman worthy to share the fortunes of Rodrigo del Bivar, the "Cid Campeador."

In the "Romances del Cid" we have a most accurate picture of the age. Many of its customs, as there related, may still be traced in remote nooks of some of the provinces, where, alone, alas! some few vestiges of Spain yet survive. The French dramatist made admirable use of his rich materials, giving at times in two lines the true spirit and full effect of the feelings and sentiments that in their original form, however powerful in their quaint expression, were inadmissible on a modern stage. For instance, when the insulted old man tries the muscles and courage of his son, the whole point of the scene is rendered in that oft-quoted and splendid passage:

"Rodrigue, as tu du cœur?
Tout autre que mon père
L'éprouverait sur l'heure."

The remainder of the scene is almost literally taken from the ballads. It is a pity that the great poet who did such strict justice to his fine models did not bring in the characteristic passage of the ballad wherein *Rodrigo* addresses his sword —the sword of Mudarra—and which ends with the following lines:

"Thou hast found, oh noble sword, a second master; shouldst thou e'er be vanquished, I'll hide the shame of thy dishonored blade, even to the hilt, in my breast."

Of all the characters undertaken by Mademoiselle Rachel, this proved the most complete failure—a failure, too, which she never redeemed by any after excellence in it. Nature had not unfitted her for it, but gross ignorance of the character prevented her success. Even those actresses who have attained a high degree of eminence in their art have misconceived the part of *Chimène*. They have invariably presented a woe-begone, tearful maid, whom filial duty compels to demand the death of her lover, but who does so very reluctantly, and is ready to unsay her words as soon as uttered. Modern critics ascribed the failure of Rachel to the lack of pathos, and renewed the reproach that she was incapable of expressing the warmth of feeling, the moving tenderness of a child of the sunny South. *Chimène* is no more a child of the South than of the North; she is a being of an age and land known to us only through tradition. Far from being the weeping, love-sick, lackadaisical creature the French stage has always presented, her unshed tears fall back on her heart in burning showers. Corneille chose his heroine among the Spanish women of the olden time, and, unfortunately, Rachel had never heard of them. The ancient Romanceros and Cancioneros, the traditions and legends of Spain, its history tinged with the rainbow hues of romance, had never excited her imagination, accelerated the beat of her heart, or brought sympathetic tears to her eyes. Her cold, calm pulse had never throbbed the faster as she read of the struggles of the magnanimous Castilian, defending his religion, and reconquering, inch by inch, the land of his fathers from his no less noble Moorish foes. Their deeds of brilliant valor and devoted patriotism had found no responsive echo in her soul. Yet, without these sympathetic emotions, the part of *Chimène* or that of *Rodrigo* is impossible. No matter how remote the action, the actor must identify himself with the personage. It may be doubted, indeed, if Mademoiselle Rachel had ever heard of the "Cid" before she—we will not say learned—but *committed to memory* the *rôle* of his betrothed. She went blindly to the task, without the slightest idea of the preparatory studies indispensable to its performance—without the least conception of the motives that influenced the will or determined the ac-

tions of a high-born Spanish maiden of the eleventh century, to whom honor was the breath of life. She was wholly incapable of understanding the soul-tortures of her who demands of the king the death of her lover for the death of her father, even while her own bleeding heart acknowledges the justice of the deed—even while her own lips confess that, had he acted otherwise, she would have scorned the craven! Yet, of these terrible sacrifices of the dearest affections to the inexorable laws of honor, instances are frequent in the annals of Spain. Mrs. Hemans chose a still more fearful one as the theme of her "Siege of Valencia," a father dooming his two innocent sons to death rather than give up to the besiegers the town his king had intrusted to him.

To understand that the customs of the age made it highly honorable for *Chimène* to forego her vengeance subsequently, and become the wife of him who had killed her father, Rachel should have read the ballad:

"Maté à tu padre Ximena,
Pero no á desaquisado,
Matéle de hombre á hombre
Para vengar cierto agravio,
Maté hombre y hombre doy,
Aquiestoy á tu mandado,
Yen lugar del muerto padre
Cobraste marido honrado."

"I killed thy father, *Ximena*, but not in treacherous wise. I killed him man to man, to avenge a certain grief. I killed a man, a man I give. Therefore stand I at thy command, and for thy father dead, an honored husband offer."

If *Chimène* is right in demanding her lover's life for her father's, she is also justified in forgiving him. *Rodrigo* offers her, in accordance with the customs of the age, the blood of conquered Moors in expiation of her father's.

Rachel had neither the gait, the look, nor the voice of her who boldly reminds her sovereign that

"Rey que no haste justicia
Non debia de reinare,
Ni cabalgar en caballo
Ni espucla de oro calzáre."

"The king that grants not justice deserveth not to reign, nor should he steed bestride, nor wear a golden spur."

Yet who better than Rachel could have uttered the commanding appeal of the spirited daughter of Count Gormaz?

Even for her dress Rachel would have done well to have consulted the costumes of the eleventh century, so minutely described in those same old ballads. Her attire, especially the pink gown of the first act, would not have presented so pitiful an anachronism.

The result of all this ignorance and presumption was that, at the finest passage of the *rôle*, a noisy and energetic protest, mingled with hisses, greeted the injudicious applause with which her partisans endeavored to sustain the actress. A dead silence succeeded.

Thus once more fell the play that has done so much honor to Corneille, the master-piece, the original success of which so nettled the jealousy of the Cardinal de Richelieu that, according to Fontenelle, *he would rather have seen the Spaniards at the gates of Paris.* Mademoiselle Rachel might, with good reason, have said *Meâ culpâ, meâ maximâ culpâ.* She had acted neither the traditional *Chimène* of the French stage, nor the chivalrous *Ximena* of the Spanish legends; she had presented a pale, wishy-washy nondescript no modern public would accept, and which the *Cid* certainly never would have recognized.

The "Ariane" of Thomas Corneille was revived on the 7th of May. No two dramas could differ more essentially than did the one Mademoiselle Rachel had so lately failed in and this one. "Ariane" is as dull, as stupid, as full of improbable actions and impossible situations, as replete with lame, halting, hollow, vapid, wretched poetry, without rhyme, and, *certes*, without reason, and as full of grammatical errors, as the "Cid" is interesting, energetic, natural, and full of magnificent passages.

This dull, insipid elegy contains nothing heroic, noble, or dramatic. The desertion of *Theseus* is almost justified by the contempt we feel for the heroine, than whom a more unworthy was never chosen by an author. The little interest there is *is* concentrated in *Ariadne*, but the very few fine passages

can not compensate the monotony of her long lamentations or the insignificance of the other *dramatis personæ*. The play was indebted for its success, when first brought out in 1672, to the celebrated Mademoiselle de Champmeste, who played the part of *Ariadne*. Of this actress and of the tragedy Madame de Sevigné has left us the following opinion:

"La Champmeste is something so extraordinary that in your life you never saw her equal; it is the actress we seek, and not the play. I have seen 'Ariane' for the sake of La Champmeste only. The play is insipid, the players wretched; but when La Champmeste comes in a murmur is heard, every body is in raptures; her despair makes every one weep."

This charming actress, among whose devoted admirers were the greatest poets of her time—this idol, to whom La Fontaine dedicated his tale of "Belphegor," and whom he praised in lines such as he alone could write—for whom Racine wrote several of his master-pieces—La Champmeste had neither education nor natural wit. Perhaps with her illustrious friends this ignorance may not have been the least of her attractions. Having inquired of Racine whence he had taken the subject of "Athalie," he answered, from the "Old Testament." "You had better have taken it from the 'New,'" said she; "it would have been more fashionable."

She remained on the stage, exciting admiration and enthusiasm, to her death, at the age of fifty-seven, in 1698. Shortly before she died, some one attempting to bring her mind to the serious contemplation of the future state she was about entering, she replied, "Oh, well, well, if Paradise be so pleasant a place, there is, no doubt, a theatre, and in that case God the Father will not be sorry to see me make my *début* there."

A century later, another stage celebrity, Mademoiselle Clairon, endeavored to reconcile the forsaken *Ariadne* with the public; with what success may be judged by the reply the actress made to a lord of the bedchamber who was complaining that the curtain was allowed to fall at the fourth act: "*Ma foi, monseigneur*," said she, "I would like to see what sort of countenance you would have in the fifth act if you had been hissed without cessation during the preceding ones." Yet Mademoiselle Clairon was beautiful, and not only talented in

her profession, but of excellent and well-cultivated intellect. Of the effect she produced in even so poor a part the following anecdote is told.

She was speaking the passage in which *Ariadne*, in doubt as to who is the rival that has robbed her of *Theseus*' heart, says,

"Est ce Mégiste Eglé qui le rend infidèle?"

when a man from the pit loudly exclaimed, "It's Phèdre; it's that —— of a Phèdre." Though course in its expression, this confirmation of the illusion her acting produced was not a little gratifying to the actress.

What her predecessors in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries had failed in accomplishing, Mademoiselle Rachel was not more fortunate in achieving in the nineteenth.

Yet, with all its defects, the tragedy of Thomas Corneille offered in the subject so great an analogy with the "Andromaque" of Racine, that the actress whose most successful *rôle* had always been the part of *Hermione*, found herself at home in that of *Ariadne*. A critic of the day remarked that her slight figure, her pale brow, her deep-set black eyes, her nervous, feverish demeanor, her small head, reminding the spectator of that of a viper standing erect on its tail, her bitter smile, her nostrils swollen with disdain, her ferocity of tone and her explosions of rage, bore certainly no resemblance to the Melpomene of antiquity, that grand and noble figure whose beauty no excess of grief can alter, and who, even as she falls stabbed to the heart, is mindful of the graceful folds of her tunic, even in the last convulsion of her agony. Yet all these distinguishing characteristics contributed only to the partial success of the forsaken bride of *Theseus*. Mademoiselle Rachel did her utmost to sustain the play, and it certainly required all her talent and the greatest exertions to make it acceptable. The selection of this wretched piece was very unfortunate, and it will be seen that her next revival was no less so.

With "Ariane" closed the Parisian season of 1842, and in July Mademoiselle Rachel hastened back to London, where she hoped for triumphs that would compensate the decrease of her popularity at home. But some little matters had come to light since her last trip that had greatly lessened the esteem in which she was once held there; the novelty, too, was

gone, the enthusiasm had gone down somewhat, and, to Mademoiselle Rachel's great disappointment, she found her star pale before the two planets, Bouffé and Déjazet, who in succession crossed the Channel this year.

Rather disgusted with the fickleness of her English public, and annoyed that she should have to share the favor she had hitherto enjoyed alone, Rachel soon left for Antwerp, where she arrived on the 17th of July.

The most brilliant success attained by Rachel was that she had this year in Brussels. The first night the house brought in 7500 francs; the second, 8300 francs. Total, 15,800 francs in two evenings.

The following table will show how great were the pecuniary advantages Mademoiselle Rachel derived from her *congés*.

She arrived in Brussels on the evening of the 18th of July, and left that city to return to Paris on the 31st of August. In that time she performed twelve nights. These twelve nights put more than 30,000 francs in the pocket of the celebrated actress. With the addition of three scenes performed in Ghent on the 24th of August, it will be seen that the forty-four days she spent in Belgium averaged more than 800 francs each, or, counting only the twelve nights she played, each performance brought her in 2500 francs.

The Théâtre Français undertook to celebrate this year the anniversary of Corneille's birth. The plays given were "Le Cid" and "Le Menteur." The bust of Corneille was crowned on the stage. The *fête* might be called a family one; as the name of Mademoiselle Rachel was not on the bills, the public, who cared for the great master only when he was interpreted by her, kept away, and the receipts did not exceed 500 francs! When Mademoiselle Mars retired, the admirers of Molière mourned his master-pieces as forever exiled from the stage. At the death of Talma, Corneille and Racine became forgotten gods until the fire was rekindled on their altars by Mademoiselle Rachel. On the sixth of June this year, the young priestess had carried her gods and their worship elsewhere, and the Parisians did not even notice that this celebration of Corneille's birth-day was a novelty. The following year, when the day came, she was in Rouen, and the Théâtre Français

refrained from attempting to show to the memory of Corneille a homage that in that deserted house was equivalent to an insult. It was not until the year 1844, when Mademoiselle Rachel was in Paris, that the celebration of this day was regularly instituted.

The reappearance of Mademoiselle Rachel in September was effected very quietly, without any of the usual attempts to insure a brilliant reception. Her friends argued very judiciously that these efforts should be reserved for the cases in which they were really necessary, but that in the present one the fame the actress had acquired abroad heralded with sufficient *éclat* her appearance at home. Whenever signs of coolness were visible on the Parisian horizon, the tongues of rumor were set to work to excite a new sensation; puffs, bulletins, private correspondence published for the benefit of the public, &c., &c., all the resources of the art of getting up an excitement, were made use of.

The tragedy of "Frédégonde et Brunehaut" of Mr. Lemercier was announced as being in rehearsal, and excited great expectations from the opinion then prevailing that the *rôle* of *Frédégonde* was particularly well adapted to Rachel's powers. This was a great mistake. Rachel had been all her life the organ of the great classic poets; accustomed to the majesty, the measured dignity, the pomp and grandeur of the sonorous Alexandrine, her clear, distinct enunciation brought out every beauty in bold relief, but, unfortunately, it did the same with every fault. She had not acquired the art of disguising errors, strengthening weak points, and gliding over unpardonable ones, of concealing under the warmth and vivacity of delivery the meagreness of the author's style. The wretched poetry of "Frédégonde" was absolutely unbearable uttered by the lips of Mademoiselle Rachel; and this attempted resurrection added a third failure to the unfortunate experiments of this year. Yet the subject of this tragedy was one that offered abundant materials to a clever pen. Modern authors continue to seek in the worn annals of Greece and Rome their plot and *dramatis personæ*, neglecting the inexhaustible stores the history of their own country affords; and when they do attempt any one of its fertile subjects, there seems to be a fa-

tality attached to them—the execution is so poor, the poetical garb so mean, the accessories introduced are in such bad taste, that they manage to despoil the theme of every original beauty. "Frédégonde et Brunehaut," "Jeanne d'Arc," and others, have been proofs of this.

---

## CHAPTER XI.

### 1843.

First Step in Life as a Free Woman.—A Portrait *au moral et au physique.*—Corroboratory Anecdotes.—Mademoiselle Aveuel.—The Cash-box.—The Fascination of Gold on different Minds.—Making Collections.—Expensive Fancies.—The Guitar.

It was in the Rue de Luxembourg that the long-looked-for hour of Rachel's majority at last dawned. The first use she made of her enfranchisement was to loosen the paternal gripe that had hitherto been fastened on her earnings. There was good reason for her impatience in this instance. Though her talent and constant and fatiguing exertions had raised the family to a position which, compared with the one they previously held, was very brilliant; though her younger sisters and her brother were being educated at her expense, and though her money clothed, housed, and fed them all, the old man allowed her out of her handsome salary but 300 francs per month for her dress, theatrical costumes, and pocket-money! The sum was altogether inadequate to her requirements, and this grievance had occasioned frequent bickerings, all to no avail, until the day arrived when the father knew he had no legal right to dispose of his daughter's property. Even then there was a violent quarrel on the subject, and the upshot was that Rachel marched out of the house, taking nothing but what she had on, and installed herself in an apartment on the Quai Voltaire, which she furnished handsomely, leaving to her parents all the furniture of that of the Rue de Luxembourg.

The decisive step Rachel had taken was attributed by the family to the advice of a male friend whose influence was then very great with her, and, fearful that this influence might be extended still farther to their prejudice, they took an early

opportunity to break the friendly tie. Surrounded as she was, this was no difficult matter; vanity and love of conquest on one side, jealousy on the other, afforded excellent grounds, and the friends parted to meet no more for ten years, when they met again under peculiarly sad circumstances, each having been recently bereaved of a most dear friend.

Though the scene of separation from her relatives had been very violent, the reconciliation was soon effected. The fugitive was too valuable a member of the family for any rupture to be of long duration. Rachel, too, was never unkind to her parents. Whatever were the faults of her race, nature, or education — whatever errors she may have fallen into, her generosity toward all the members of her family, particularly toward her father and mother, has been unceasing. She left them all the apartment they lived in contained, and gave her father a pension of 12,000 francs, and to her mother, for her private use, one of 4000 francs: these sums were paid yearly with great regularity. Besides these pensions, she was always lavish of gifts to all the members of her family, repeatedly paying the debts of her elder sister, and constantly exerting her influence to obtain engagements and high salaries for her brother and sisters.

But, though an excellent daughter and kind sister, she did not manifest her affection in so romantic a manner as the newspaper anecdotes would have it believed. A very affecting trait of sisterly solicitude, in which Rachel was made to play the part of the beneficent fairy in the story-books, was published lately. The tale ran as follows:

Rachel and Rebecca were playing *Tisbe* and *Catarina* in "Angelo." Delighted with Rebecca's success, Rachel hired a handsome apartment, furnished it suitably, omitting nothing, from the house-linen in the clothes-press to the wine, wood, and coals, with which the cellars were well stocked. When all was in readiness, one night after the play she took her sister to see her new domain, saying, as she placed the key—not *Angelo's*—in *Catarina's* hand,

"My dear, you have played like an angel, and I have provided your reward; all this is yours."

This delightful little surprise, got up at a cost of 15,000

francs, properly enhanced by the description of the joy of the younger sister, the affecting embrace, the emotion of friends witnessing the pathetic scene, and the excellence of the supper that was the finale—for even that had been provided by the provident donor—constituted a pretty little episode for the biography of Rachel, to which only one objection could be made—its lack of truth. Whatever might be the affection of the *tragedienne* for this sister, it never led her to such a demonstration. When Rebecca died she had not finished paying for the furniture which she had herself purchased for her apartment; she was, moreover, so much in debt that the family made no claim to what she left, lest they should have to pay the creditors, for whose benefit, therefore, every thing was sold at auction.

All the Felixes have been accustomed to look to Rachel, and with good reason, as their main stay and support. They repay and keep up the flow of generosity by a continual adoration of the idol that sometimes takes the most ludicrous forms. When she plays, the mother and sisters go off into ecstasies of delight, clapping their hands, crying out Brava! bravissima! vociferating "Was ever the like seen! She is an angel! Adorable! divine!" &c., and ending the farce by throwing their ready-prepared bouquets on the stage. It requires the really extraordinary talent of Rachel to make managers tolerate these silly scenes. But Rachel has reigned supreme and despotic behind the curtain throughout her career. From the manager to the fireman and scene-shifter, all have been the cringing slaves of her will, dreading her frown, disputing her smiles, attentive to her slightest wish. At the Théâtre Français, king or emperor, even the government that supports it, none have the regal despotic power exercised there by Rachel. At the hour for the curtain to rise a respectful knock is heard at the door, followed by the words, "Is madame quite ready? Will madame have the goodness to say when the signal shall be given." The answer is, "*In ten or fifteen minutes—presently—now*," &c., as she pleases; no one else is consulted, though all the other actors are bound to hold themselves in readiness at the hour. Her word was law. As to authors, we will not shame the world of *belles-lettres* by

mentioning the degree of base servility to which some of the illustrious of modern literature have unblushingly stooped to please this queen of the buskin. The acts of injustice done to other actors and actresses to make room for some very inferior talent, merely because its possessor bore the name of Felix, are recorded in the memory of many a poor sufferer. The advancement, the interest of her own family were sought without regard to any considerations of equity or even gratitude. A flagrant instance of this occurred in the case of a very charming and deserving actress, who personated with remarkable talent the *suivantes* of Molière. Mademoiselle Aveuel had consented to accompany Rachel on several of her foreign tours, and had proved one of the most efficient members of her company. But absence, especially in the position of Mademoiselle Aveuel, is always dangerous. On her return she found herself without any engagement. Mademoiselle Rachel immediately proffered her powerful influence, and persuaded her to take no steps whatever, as she took it upon herself to obtain the engagement at the Théâtre Français. She appointed an hour for Mademoiselle Aveuel to call upon the manager, saying she would have the whole thing settled by that time. Rachel kept her word; when Mademoiselle Aveuel, punctual to a minute, was wending her way to the manager's office, she met Sarah, who was leaving it, and who informed her with great glee that she had just signed a very advantageous engagement that her sister had procured for her. Poor Mademoiselle Aveuel's heart sank at this communication, but she went in notwithstanding. The thing was too true: Mademoiselle Rachel had obtained the contract—*for her sister*. The victim had unfortunately no protection, no means of advancement.

A few words are due here to this charming actress, whose pure mind and strict principles contributed as much as her real talent to make her an honor to her profession. Aline Aveuel, who had entered the *Conservatoire* about the same time as the *tragediénne*, made her *débût* in 1839, and obtained great success in another line of the dramatic art. She was one of the best representatives of Molière's *soubrettes* that had been seen for many years on the boards of the Théâtre Fran-

çais. An indefatigable and conscientious student of the art she professed, she studied it *con amore*. Her firm, distinct, and correct diction, the discrimination, good taste, and expression of her pantomime, her bright, lively eyes, clear-toned, pleasant voice, fitted her admirably for the characters of the *Nicoles*, *Dorines*, and *Marinettes*, those malapert and piquant match-makers and match-marrers, always helping miss to frustrate papa's wise plans, and themselves the darlings of the laughter-loving public. Mademoiselle Aveuel subsequently quitted the Théâtre Français for reasons it is not our province to explain, and accompanied Mademoiselle Rachel in many of her professional excursions into England, Germany, and Italy, taking an altogether different branch to that she had hitherto performed in, but one in which she proved herself possessed of no little ability. Her fine form and commanding figure, that were rather objections in the *rôle* of the dapper little *soubrette*, gave admirable relief to those of the proud Duchess de Bouillon in "Adrienne Lecouvreur," and of the Countess in "Lady Tartuffe."

The sterling qualities of Mademoiselle Aveuel, the unswerving rectitude of her conduct, had opened before her the doors of some of the most aristocratic *salons* in Paris. But no success in private life could fill the void left in her heart by the loss of her professional career. She passionately loved her art, and the hopes so long deferred, the sickening disappointments she suffered in attempting to regain the place she had lost, contributed no little to hasten her death, which took place on the 26th of April, 1857.

Of all the sisters, Rachel is considered to have been the only one capable of acting to the life that most difficult of all parts for the *parvenu*, the *rôle* of a gentlewoman. There was a dignity *de grande dame* about her, an ease and grace that procured her as much admiration as her talent. She entered the splendid aristocratic sphere into which her successful *débûts* had obtained admittance for her without manifesting vanity or surprise; she seemed literally to the manner born, and accepted the favors of fortune as her due. There was a witchery about her that baffles description. Her very worst enemies, persons whom she has the most deeply wronged, acknowl-

ege this fascination, and say it was impossible to come within the sphere of her influence without being won and completely subdued, if she chose to will it. In fact, very little outward change had taken place in her since she wore the little calico frock and trowsers at the *Cours* of St. Aulaire, save that she had grown and was better dressed. The same calm, grave expression of face, and, it must be owned, something of the elf tricks and capricious temper remained. She has frequently been known to ask some of her young friends to dine or take tea with her; when the guest arrived the hostess was gone out. When reproached with her uncivil conduct, she would make some plausible excuse, appoint another day, and renew her breach of word. Exceedingly courteous and kindly in manner, if any thing belonging to her appeared to please her visitor, her first impulse was to offer it, to press it urgently on the acceptance of the person who admired it. If any hesitation was shown, she threatened to send it home to her friend. If the gift so persistingly offered was accepted, Rachel's Jew nature regained the ascendency. She repented her prodigal generosity; the bauble she had bestowed became an indispensable necessity, just the thing she could not do without, and she had no rest till she had sent to request it to be returned!

At times she met with some resistance in this particular. Obstinate people took her at her word, and made her give what she had promised, or they kept what she had given them. She had a way of saying, if any jewel she wore, or article of *virtu* in her rooms was admired, "I wish I could offer this to you, but it was a present from the Prince of —— or the Duke of ——, and I can not; you shall, however, have one just like it; I know where to get the mate, and you will give me great pleasure by your acceptance. Oh, you shall, I insist upon it; you would not disoblige me, &c., &c., &c." This generally took place before a number of persons, and, as the promised present was usually of value, conveyed a high opinion of her generosity to those who did not know her, while it was very annoying to those who did, and were considered the recipients of these generous gifts.

She one day said to a friend who was admiring a very beau-

tifully-carved and embroidered chair, "I am glad you like it: it is my work, and you shall have it to remember me."

"You give it to me, then?"

"Certainly, and I shall have it sent to your rooms."

"I am exceedingly obliged to you, and shall not trouble you to send it, but, since you are so good as to give it me, shall take it now."

Rachel laughed; it was not an article he could put in his pocket. But the friend knew her, and was resolved not to be fooled. He ran down stairs and was back again in a moment with a *commissionaire*, who bore off the prize.

To Leon de Beauvallet she gave a sabre of fine Turkish workmanship. "She can not ask to have it back," said he, "for I have had a chain put to it."

The anecdotes told of her ostentatious generosity without expense to herself are very numerous, but not all very reliable; for the truth of the following we do not pretend to vouch.

In 1853, Marguet, formerly a *Suisse* in the service of Louis Philippe, but who had subsequently been long attached to the Théâtre Français in the humble capacity of call-boy, retired. As he was universally liked, the *sociétaires* subscribed 20 francs each to buy him a snuff-box. Mademoiselle Rachel undertook the purchase, and had the following inscription engraved on the lid: "Mademoiselle Rachel à Marguet."

There was a constant struggle in her, nature and early habits of parsimony being ever at variance with the wish to be thought generous, with the love of ostentation. These conflicting impulses frequently led to a betrayal of feelings the very reverse of what she intended to exhibit. The story of the pine-apple will give some idea of this apparent inconsistency. Having occasion to give a dinner to a number of eminent personages, she ordered her desert at Chevet's. Among the expensive hot-house fruit selected was a pine-apple. At this epoch—1848—so few dinners were given that it was scarcely worth while to import this tropical fruit; it was consequently rare and dear. Rather than give the exorbitant price asked—70 francs—for the one she desired should form the pinnacle of her pyramidal desert, yet unwilling to give up the pleasure of seeing it admired there, she chose a compro-

mise, and hired it. Unfortunately, she had been accompanied to Chevet's by a mischievous friend, who, at desert, wickedly suggested to one of the noble guests the cutting of the ornamental summit. As the duke inserted the knife into the sacred fruit, the hostess, losing all command of her feelings, uttered a piercing shriek. "Was the heart of Mademoiselle Rachel hidden in that pine?" queried a well-known poet.

Nothing could restore the good-humor of the *tragédienne*. She had not hesitated to give a dinner that cost her 1200 francs; she was wretched at having been disappointed in her scheme to save 70 francs.

Rachel was herself so well aware of being a great promiser, and as backward to fulfill as she was ready to promise, that, alluding to this propensity, she said to a friend once, "If I were obliged to give all I have ever promised, the possession of the whole world would not furnish me wherewith." The reason of this seeming contradiction was, that the constant wish to please every one about her, to purchase their goodwill by every possible sacrifice, actuated her first impulse: she had no sooner obeyed it than the fear of having lessened her possessions took the alarm, and undid what the love of admiration had done.

This incessant craving for admiration kept her continually on the alert. *Elle pose toujours* is said by all who know her; that is, she felt always before the foot-lights, and was as desirous of obtaining the praise of the porter at the gate as that of the lord of the chateau. She was one day with her sister Sarah at her house in the valley of Montmorenci while some repairs were being made. As they sat alone together, Rachel remarked how inconvenient stiff skirts were.

"Why do you wear them when we are here alone?" said Sarah.

"Oh dear," cried the *tragédienne*, "I couldn't think of being seen by the workmen so thin and scraggy as I look without a crinoline!"

In this strange being, in whom great, even sublime things were mingled with the petty littlenesses, the trivialities, the meannesses inherent to the lower class of the race, there was one passion that predominated over all the rest, and to which

her woman's vanity, her artist's pride gave way; to which her very genius was made the subservient tool—that passion which was born with her—the *love of gold*. Beyond this there was nothing in life. An incident, related by herself, will give some idea of the extreme to which it was carried.

Shortly after she had attained her majority, she had gone to Marseilles, where, for one night's performance, she was to receive 3000 francs. On the day after the performance, the money was brought to her in a chest. At that time gold was not the common medium of circulation it has since become, and payments, even of large sums, were often made in silver. Rachel was recently emancipated from the parental trammels; she had never had in her own possession any thing like this amount. At sight of this box, full of five-franc pieces, this quantity of money all *hers*, her eyes dilated, and fastened upon it with an intensity that was almost painful to behold; to use her own words, worthy of an actress accustomed to a tragic style, she felt *the ferocious joy of an animal that has the long-wished-for prey within its clutches*. There was no childish exultation, no outward delight, none of the exultant pride of the girl who has by her own exertions earned a large sum, no feminine feelings of pleasant anticipation of the many pretty fancies this sum could gratify; no, it was a quiet, inward, savage enjoyment of the *money itself*, independent of all associations generally connected with it. She ordered the box to be placed before her by her bedside, and, plunging her hands into it, kept stirring the silver about.

"Never," said she to the person to whom she related this, "never had I seen so many five-franc pieces together, and all belonging to me."

She kept the box by her, and the feeling, sordid, rapacious, possessed her throughout the night.

The fascination exercised by gold on the human mind, according to the character, temper, &c., of the person on whom it acts, is extremely diversified in its effects; were these always candidly acknowledged, the insight thus obtained would afford matter for interesting study. An instance of this singular influence occurred within the knowledge of the writer. A very young lady received a sum of 3000 dollars shortly

after her marriage. Though the daughter of persons in good circumstances, she had never had so large a sum at her own disposal. The sight of this number of gold pieces produced an effect similar to that she would have felt had she been drinking wine—a species of intoxication. When she retired to bed, she spread the money on the sheets and slept upon it! Yet this person was the very reverse of avaricious. According to her own analysis of her feelings, it was the consciousness of the power gold represented that gave it so great a charm. The feeling was, however, as short-lived as it was sudden.

Less innocent effects of this fascination have brought its victims within the pale of a criminal court. Among these unfortunates was, of late years, a young man of respectable parentage, who had always borne an excellent character for strict integrity. Having obtained a situation with a chemist, he was one day left alone before an open drawer containing a large sum of money. The temptation overpowered his natural honesty. Being subsequently asked by the magistrate how it happened that he, who had been so well brought up, whose principles of honesty had hitherto been so firm, should have committed an act that seated him on the bench with hardened thieves, he replied that he was not in his senses, for the instant he fixed his eyes on the drawer *the fever of gold ascended to his brain!*

To gratify this insatiate desire to add continually to her store, Rachel is said to have tasked her inventive powers, and generally with the success that attended all her undertakings. The following anecdote was current among her acquaintances: On one occasion she announced to her numerous friends and admirers that she had a perfect passion for emeralds, and intended making a collection of those beautiful gems. For this purpose she had already procured a very fine one, which she complacently exhibited to one of the titled sons of fortune who followed in the train of the tragic muse as the gift of a competitor in the race for her good graces. The appeal was understood and responded to with a contribution of course more valuable than the specimen exhibited, the last gift in turn doing duty as a decoy to draw others, until the collec-

tion was large as it was rich and rare, no one being willing to be outdone by his predecessor. This manœuvre, varied according to the victim played upon, brought into the lady's jewel casket some thirty or forty of the finest emeralds in Paris, each gem set with more or less magnificence, and some surrounded with brilliants.

The following year the whim was for rubies, and finally the lady raised a sapphire tax. When her ingenuity or the generosity of her contributors was exhausted, a jeweler was sent for, to whom the valued and valuable souvenirs were sold for the price that could be obtained: the money was put where it brought in better interest than in its former more brilliant but less profitable shape.

The story of the guitar has been told in a variety of ways; the following is reported to be the most authentic version:

Every one has heard of the grand vizier who had once been a shepherd-boy, and who, having attained to the summit of power, desirous of being kept in remembrance of his early poverty, had hung up in a room of his sumptuous palace the humble garb, the shepherd's crook, of his boyhood. A report was long afloat that, following this excellent example, Mademoiselle Rachel had hung on her gilded walls the time-worn guitar of the barefooted street-minstrel. The groundwork of this affecting anecdote is quite true: there *is* or *was* a *guitar*, and that guitar occupied a conspicuous and honorable place among the splendid ornaments of Mademoiselle Rachel's boudoir. The celebrated artiste had noticed at the house of a friend a guitar of most respectable antiquity, the original color of which had long ago disappeared under the thick black crust with which Time had coated it.

"Are you much attached to that piece of lumber?" quoth Rachel to Madame S., the owner: "would you mind giving it to me?"

"Oh no, indeed," was the reply, "I shall be glad to get rid of it."

The maid was sent off with the guitar to Rachel's lodgings.

A few days after it was the turn of an intimate male friend to notice the instrument, but this time it hung, enveloped in a beautiful silk net, through the bright meshes of which its

black back was plainly visible, on the gilded wall of an elegant boudoir.

"What in the world have you there?" quoth the visitor.

"That," said Rachel, assuming a sentimental attitude, "that is the humble guitar, the faithful companion with which, in the days of my childhood, I earned the scanty pittance bestowed on the poor little street-singer."

"Good heavens! can it be possible? How very interesting! Oh, I beg, I entreat you to let me become the fortunate possessor of that inestimable treasure! To me, to the world, to history, a precious memento; to future generations, a priceless legacy!" exclaimed Mr. —— in the glow of his enthusiasm.

"Oh, I can never, *never* consent to part with it."

"I must have it, at any cost; do not deny me this gift, to be held as a sacred relic; and permit me to offer you, as a poor exchange, the set of diamonds and rubies you appeared to admire some days ago at the jeweler's."

"Ah! well," quoth the tragic muse, heaving a deep sigh, "since you will have it, I can not refuse you."

The *historical* instrument obtained so cheaply, at a cost of some 50,000 francs, was triumphantly installed in the aristocratic apartment of its new owner, who exhibited it to every caller, narrating its pathetic origin with the emphatic delivery of a showman at a fair. Unfortunately, the original possessor happened to have occasion to call on the noble count, and, recognizing the present she had made to Rachel, uttered an exclamation of surprise. An explanation followed, given without malice prepense; for Madame S., quite ignorant of the mischief she was doing, destroyed the romance attached to the relic so dearly purchased. Rachel repented too late not having warned her unconscious accomplice. As for the count, he could not forgive himself for having been so readily the dupe of his own unsuspecting enthusiasm.

Some one who heard of this successful little speculation and somewhat doubted its truth, mentioned the report to Mademoiselle Rachel, thinking to hear her give it an indignant denial. But the heroine only laughed, exclaiming, "Poor ——, how furious he was!"

Out of the circle of her own family Rachel was accused of having no consideration for any interest but her own. With her there was no artistic fraternity; she would crush every appearance of talent that entered her sphere, and has committed, or caused to be committed, innumerable acts of injustice in order to clear her path of any one likely to obtain the slightest share of the notice she wished entirely to monopolize. It can not be wondered that such conduct should have estranged the affections of her comrades. Some one asking Mademoiselle Judith why she was so severe in her remarks on one who, after all, was a co-religionist of hers, "True," replied the witty actress, "but with a difference: I am a Jewess, but Rachel—Rachel is a Jew!"

She has too often appeared to sacrifice the dignity of art, and made her talent a mere article of barter and sale, to be bargained for shamelessly and sold to the highest bidder. Her continual discussions and lawsuits with the management of the Théâtre Français have fully shown that she considered the theatre as her counter, her shop, where she put into practice all the tricky manœuvres of her parents' first trade to get the better of those she made contracts with. Here she gave the rein to a temper harsh, cold, despotic, sulky, or stormy, as the occasion might call it forth, but never kind or agreeable in business. With the management she has constantly been at variance, having recourse to every pretext to elude fulfilling her engagements when she found it to her advantage.

With the public, with the admirers who thronged her box between the acts—for Rachel seldom honored the green-room with her presence—she was all smiles and winning manners. In society, it has already been said, she possessed such perfect tact, so great a delicacy of intuition, so natural an appreciation of that which is refined and elegant, that from the very hour of her admission into it she moved there with graceful ease, and fell instantly into its habits, never betraying by any solecism that she pertained to a different sphere.

She was, in truth, an astonishing compound of good qualities and of imperfections, of greatness and of littleness, of the sublime and the low. Her temper offers the same strange mixture of wisdom and folly, boldness and timidity, modesty

and passion it did in early youth; in some points more developed, in others more subdued by years and circumstances, but in essence still the same fantastic, elf-like nature.

It is said that the cunning, the deceitful, tricky, doubling arts of the vendors of "ol' clo'," chaffering with menials for cast-off garments, were at times resorted to by the wealthy queen of tragedy to further her interests, and that the lips that have given such eloquent utterance to the great classic poets, and distilled Hyblean sweets to sovereigns, lords, and ladies entranced by her accents, were equally ready to drive unconscionable bargains.

The passion for locomotion which, united to the love of gain, led her to be constantly on the wing from Paris to the provinces, from France to Russia, to Germany, Italy, England, and finally to the United States, traveling incessantly during two thirds, and even three fourths of each year, may perhaps have been owing to the nomade life of the mother. Those who seek in the propensities and habits of the parent the germ of the child's inclination, in accordance with the system of pre-existent education, may here find an explanation of Rachel's roving habits. The mother's avocation had influenced the temper and tastes of her unborn babe. The *tragédienne* hawked about her talent as the parent had her less valuable merchandise. But in this particular Rachel did not differ much from other artists, philharmonic as well as dramatic.

Yet, with all her faults, it will be long, perhaps, before Nature will gift another of her children as richly as she has Rachel, and unite in one being her genius, her intuitive conception of the sublime and the beautiful, her extraordinary power of expressing what she so perfectly conceives, her grand pagan qualities, her Greek, statue-like figure, her majesty of brow and attitude, her quiet dignity of manner. If we lose her we may well say, *There is a great spirit gone.*

The passion apparently most deeply rooted in Rachel's nature was, next to the ruling one of gold, the love of dominion, the thirst of power over the hearts of others, the acquisition of whatsoever belonged to another; whether the object was the heart of a man or the most trifling bauble, it mattered not, so long as it was the property of another; it was ardently cov-

eted, and every artifice, every temptation, every seduction—and what daughter of Eve could boast of such an arsenal of irresistible weapons as that which Rachel possessed—was resorted to in order to obtain it. The instant it was hers, the longed-for object lost all attraction; it was utterly despised; unless, indeed, it possessed a metallic value, every other charm was annihilated by possession. The human victims that have been sacrificed to bring to her feet the homage tributed to another have been so numerous that she herself would have been puzzled to number them. Were hearts made of the brittle texture they are supposed to be by mad poets and boarding-school misses, the fragments of those broken by Rachel would have cumbered her path. Fortunately, those trophies are of tougher materials, and, if ever flawed, are easily mended and made as good as ever. As for her own, there was no danger: love, affection, passion, sentiment, feeling, never determined her choice. The advantages to be derived from the position, station, rank, or wealth of a friend, or the triumph of seducing the allegiance tendered at some other shrine, were ever the guiding motives of her selection, and where she willed she never failed.

It has been said that Rachel was not beautiful. Perhaps she was not to the eye that sees beauty but in certain conventional forms, in a certain color; but while none can pronounce her to have been plain, she possessed that higher degree of beauty imparted by the radiant light of genius illuminating the countenance. For such as delight in detailed accounts of each feature, we give them here, premising that descriptions never furnish an adequate idea of the effect of the whole upon the beholder.

The head was perfectly shaped, rather small, rather broad, not high, and covered with dark chestnut hair, neither thick nor thin, but beautifully fine, soft, and silky. The brow, endowed with such extraordinary power of expression, was prominent and wide, but low; her eyebrows were exquisitely drawn; the eyes, the same color as the hair, were neither large nor small, but so deep set that they had the appearance of being intensely black: they were fringed with very long silky lashes. The mouth, neither large nor small, was filled with teeth all

perfect and beautifully white; the under lip was long and thick, not suggestive of sulks, but of storms, and, though so defective in point of beauty, extremely expressive. The nose was beautiful, the curve indicating the race very slightly inclining the tip; but it was perfect in its proportions, with thin, transparent, veiny nostrils. The chin was small and pretty. The delicate little ear was compared by a soft-hearted *bon vivant* to an Ostend oyster, and lay close to the head. From the tip of the ear to the chin the face was a long oval. The skin was fair and extremely delicate. In size Rachel was rather above the middle height; her figure had the litheness, the grace, the flexibility of a reed, and, in repose, gave the impression of a very delicate constitution; but when she was acting an energetic part, the long, slight arms seemed to change to steel, so powerful was the character of inflexibility they presented. The hands, which were rather pretty, were objects of continual care and solicitude with Mademoiselle Rachel; her feet might have served as models to a modern Praxiteles. The limbs were so well fastened on, the shoulders so graceful, that the thinness of the figure was hardly noticed. The peculiar shape of the chest, however, almost amounted to a deformity: the breast-bone was like a fowl's, bony, projecting sharply, ungraceful to the eye. The defect was not at all perceptible either in theatrical costume or ordinary dress; the folds of the peplum and tunic in the first quite concealed it, and the skill of the dressmaker in the latter was no less successful.

The above attempt to describe features whose peculiar merit was in their great power of expression, in their wonderful delineations of the passions, must prove very unsatisfactory. The only description that can convey any idea of the inimitable *jeu de physionomie* of that eloquent face is the exhortation of Henry V. to his soldiers—an exhortation she had never read, but which nature had taught her to obey to the letter:

> "Stiffen the sinews, summon up the blood,
> Disguise fair nature with hard favored-rage;
> Then lend the eye a terrible aspect;
> Let it pry through the portage of the head
> Like the brass cannon; let the brow o'erwhelm it

As fearfully as doth a galled rock
O'erhang and jutty his confounded base,
Swill'd with the wild and wasteful ocean.
Now set the teeth and stretch the nostrils wide;
Hold hard the breath, and bend up every spirit
To his full height."

All this the features of Mademoiselle Rachel were eminently fitted to convey. She had also, with that intuitive knowledge that sometimes takes the place of study, followed the excellent advice of *Hamlet* to the players, and marred with rant and scream none of the effects produced by her countenance. Few actors have, like her, made silence often more eloquent than words. Few have so well understood that excessive grief is never expressed by violent action; that deep reflection precludes it altogether; that indignation, contempt, pride, menace, concentrated rage, are shown in the countenance rather than in the motions. A look contains more terror than the frantic stride; the often ludicrous gestures that "please the vulgar, make the critic laugh." The ancients, who acted under a mask, could have no idea of the advantages derived from the system adopted by the moderns.

---

## CHAPTER XII.

1843.

### The Drama behind the Mask.

It is not unfrequently the case that reality, more poignant than the most highly-wrought fiction, is concealed beneath the tragic mask. The stage is then the arena of gladiators who peril far more than the combatants in the Roman circus, for the latter periled life only; the modern gladiator stakes the Divine ray, the God-given torch—his reason. At times the unconscious judges who have come to while away an hour, to see how far and how well humanity can be mimicked in its wildest and most terrific moods, how nicely the unnatural may be made to look natural, how closely fiction can be made to resemble truth, at times these indifferent spectators, eager

only to get the worth of their money, and ready to cavil on a word and harp on a gesture, little deem that before their eyes another and a far more fatal drama is being performed. But there are other instances when the secret has ceased to be one; when the knowledge of the terrific stake to be played has been made an incentive to increase the interest; when the life, the death, or madness of a fellow-creature, his fearful struggle, his last agony, his despairing effort to rekindle the expiring ray, are used as attractive items in the playbill; when the victim himself makes a speculation of his tortures, sanctions this fearful exposure of the most pitiful bereavement that can afflict a God-forsaken creature, and counts in anticipation the gains.

Ay, all are bidden to the harrowing *fête*, all respond eagerly to the summons, for the spectacle is to be no common one —a remnant of humanity, wearing still the outer semblance of a man, while all within is vacancy; a being all once knew so well, who knows himself no longer; whose friends, whose children, whose very name are effaced from the tablet of his blurred and blotted memory. Yet this name he has forgotten was once, to thousands of his admirers, suggestive of no sadness. At its mention the merry laugh and droll jest again resounded in the ear, melancholy took flight, wit and humor reigned omnipotent.

This shattered idol, this defaced relic of the past, has intervals when light pierces the darkness; when dethroned reason for a brief space resumes her sway; when he fathoms the abyss into which he has fallen; when he is conscious of what is, remembers what was, and, worst of all, knows what must be again—in a day—in an hour—anon—even, perhaps, while he thinks of it. And this unfortunate has bethought himself that another such gleam of intelligence may be taken advantage of to secure to the rayless night of his old age physical comforts that money alone can procure. He has but an hour, an uncertain, fleeting hour; he will sell it to the world for bread. Yesterday he was nameless, to-morrow he will again be so, but to-night he will give the public the personification of the wittiest, most sarcastic, most brilliant and fascinating of his characters. Ay, he is right, too, in his anticipation of pecuniary success. The alms the cold charity of the world

have grudged his misfortune will be willingly paid as the reward of this gratification of morbid curiosity.

In the early part of January, Mademoiselle Rachel acted for the benefit of Monrose, one of the best *Figaros* the boards had ever known. Poor Monrose had been indebted to his success in Beaumarchais's play to a constant study of it that had had the most fatal result—insanity. He did not *play* the part; he had indentified himself with it, on the stage and off of it; at table, waking and sleeping, he was in his *rôle*. This constant absorption of the author's creation produced a strange phenomenon: the actor could no longer lay down the fictitious part, and be himself; the character, like the robe of the *centaur*, clung to him, and would not be torn away. He had forgotten his name, but he immediately answered to that of *Figaro*. In conversation he was absent, and appeared neither to hear nor understand; but a quotation from the "Barbier" brought forth a prompt, an animated answer, the droll gesture, the contagious laugh. He had forgotten his own existence, he had not forgotten a line of the play!

We have said that the unfortunate actor had determined, in a lucid interval, to take advantage of the next one to come again before the public, and endeavor to earn during that respite wherewith to supply himself with the comforts his helpless condition required. The house was crowded; the anxiety of spectators and actors may be readily conceived; the sight was terrible, the trial exciting in the highest degree. All, conscious of the truth, dreaded at each word, at each gesture, a return of the fatal malady; nay, doubted whether it had not returned and was not lurking beneath the apparent calm. The *Rosine* and the *Almavives* of the evening were under the influence of a terror they could scarcely disguise. The object of all this alarm seemed to seek, by his offhand, easy grace, his brilliant sallies and his smiling looks, to reassure them. There are in the *rôle* of *Figaro* passages but too allusive to his unhappy state, and every heart beat with terror as the doomed man uttered the three words at the conclusion of the third act: "*Il est fou! Il est fou! Il est fou!*" And here, and here only, did Monrose himself seem to allow that he was aware of the truth. He uttered the sentence each time with

increased vehemence and with an expression of the most poignant grief. Even Mademoiselle Rachel, who that evening played her best character, one with which she was most familiar, actually lost her memory twice during the performance.

When Monrose entered, a thunder of applause welcomed him, and it would have been renewed much oftener had not the fear of exciting him too much counseled calmer tones of approbation. He surpassed his former self. It seemed impossible that the fine intellect, so quick at comprehending all the wit of the author, so readily interpreting it, should be doomed to utter darkness again; and, most terrible of all, that gay, laughing, charming spirit, knew his doom. The general impression, notwithstanding the wit and humor of the play, could not but be sad; the more gay and merry seemed the actor, the greater was the regret at losing him again. The farewell of the public produced a sum of 18,000 francs. The intelligent physician of the asylum, Doctor Blanche, remained behind the scenes, comforting and encouraging him between the acts, but himself paler and far more anxious than the brilliant *Figaro*.

Another sad instance of the faculty of assimilation, carried so far that the unfortunate mimic has lost his own being, and adopted that of his model, occurred some years previous to the case of Monrose. Insanity was the stage theme then in vogue, as blindness has been the recent one. Humanity, not content with the painful realities that afflict it, takes a strange delight in reproducing their semblance.

The actress who was to play the part of the stricken heroine on the boards of one of the second class theatres of the Boulevards was a young, delicate, and pretty girl, gifted with an organization far too sensitive and nervous to bear with impunity the terrible working up necessary for the personification of the *rôle*. Called upon to simulate madness—that is, the annihilation of the noblest of God's gifts—to "disguise fair nature with hard-favored rage," distort her features, and go through all the fearful mimicry of that most fearful of all diseases, she studied the part conscientiously, and frequently repaired to an insane hospital, in order to study in all its phases, and reproduce with scrupulous fidelity, unnatural na-

ture. She succeeded but too well; she learned to imitate the vacant stare, the horrid grin, the hollow laugh, the broken voice, and, step by step, acquired an appalling perfection. Fearing to lose the faculty thus painfully acquired, she kept on her terrible mask, even when off the stage, for hours together. One evening, between the acts, she carried the mockery so far as to endeavor to *persuade herself for a short time* that she was one of the wretched creatures she had so often watched striding up and down in the paved court of the Salpetrière, insane among the insane, mad among the mad, and she succeeded—succeeded beyond her wishes—succeeded *forever!* She realized her audacious mockery; the despair of the heart ascended to the reeling, overturned brain; she was seized with a vertigo; before her rose the panorama of the anticipated tomb of reason; she heard the gnashing of teeth, the heart-rending shriek, the distracting yell; she saw herself crouching among the grinning skeletons; she looked in the glass, and, behold, her eye shot forth a strange light; she tried to sing, her voice was choked; to weep, and two drops fell like molten lead on her sunken cheek; to pray, and blasphemous curses issued from her lurid lips; to clasp her hands, and the nails closed like talons into the quivering flesh; to dress herself, every tasteful instinct was gone, and in its place perverted fancies alone remained. She had accomplished her object; she had perfected her part; she had found the fearful ideal so long sought. At this awful moment the bell rings, and, true to long-followed habit, she rushed on the stage. Strange to say, the public, beholding the terribly truthful apparition, this haggard, soiled, ragged wretch, with dishevelled straw-wreathed hair and foaming mouth, the public hissed—the public exclaimed that the girl was *drunk*—that *it* was insulted—that *she did not know her part.* So much for the judgment of the public. Alas! she was mad; hopelessly, incurably insane; and those who may wish to attain perfection in the part can study it at their leisure in the person of its victim, who, clothed in the ignominious straight-jacket at the Salpetrière, remains a lesson to those who daringly outrage God in his noblest work, and throw down the gauntlet to the weak brain they should seek to strengthen.

## CHAPTER XIII.

1843.

*Phèdre:* a first Attempt.—"Judith."—An unexpected *Débutante.*—Southern Enthusiasm.—A Deed of Charity.—*Débûts* of Raphael and Rebecca Felix in the "Cid."

Mademoiselle Rachel began this year with the tragedy of "Phèdre." The day chosen—the 21st of January—caused no little surprise in the circles of the aristocratic Faubourg St. Germain, that had given so kind a reception to the young *tragédienne.* This little world, that held itself aloof, and scorned to mix with the plebeian court of 1830; that dwelt in the heart of the busy capital as isolated as though nothing existed beyond its own sphere; that adhered with noble tenacity to the religious faith, to the political creed of forefathers who had sealed them with their blood on the scaffold—the Faubourg St. Germain—had greeted with enthusiasm the new Melpomenè. With the Legitimists she was the representative of the classic—to them the monarchical—theatre. She was the principal example of a reaction that was to cast the dramatic school of the Revolution into the shade. She was the interpreter of art in all its purity; and, as such, even rigid piety felt justified in vouchsafing encouragement and support to the Jewish actress. The exclusiveness of the sphere made her admission there the more flattering, while the assiduity with which her noble friends testified their approbation by appearing at every performance was of no little value in another sense.

To these faithful ones who held sacred the terrible *souvenirs* of the past, the choice of the anniversary of the martyrdom of Louis XVI. for her *débût* in "Phèdre" was almost sacrilegious. At any rate, it denoted little respect for feeling she was bound to honor, if not to share. It was a rupture of the tacit contract that she had virtually accepted, and those who would have rejoiced in encouraging her in this new trial abstained from giving it the sanction of their presence.

Two months had scarcely elapsed since the faithless one had recited in the Convent of the Abbaye aux Bois that very *Phèdre* in the presence of the illustrious author of the "Génie du Christianisme." She had received her first ideas of this *rôle* from the lips of that great apostle of legitimacy. She had had the inestimable privilege of hearing it discussed in the presence of him who had written so eloquent, though so erroneous an analysis of the Greek queen's character. She had probably adopted the opinions echoed by his *entourage*, and seen in *Phèdre* "a mixture of spirit and matter, of despair and amorous phrensy that is beyond all expression. The woman who could be resigned to an eternity of suffering had she enjoyed one moment of happiness, that woman belongs not to the characters of antiquity. She is the last, the reprobate Christian * * * * * * her words are those of the damned."

The boldness of Mademoiselle Maxine in undertaking *Phèdre* the preceding year probably proved an incentive to Mademoiselle Rachel to try her far greater powers in this difficult *rôle*—the most difficult, indeed, of all the classic *repertoire*, the one that stamps the seal of genius on the actress, or reveals that what was hitherto taken for genius was only talent. Here too the actress had to contend against the impression Mademoiselle Duchesnois had made in the part, an impression that survived in the memory of many present. Mademoiselle Duchesnois was, *certes*, very inferior in some points to her young successor, but she possessed qualities most indispensable to tragedy of which Rachel was entirely destitute; she had from nature the faculty of expressing tenderness in its most moving form, depth of feeling in its most sympathetic, heart-stirring, passionate moods. *Phèdre*, the *rôle* of her *début*, had remained her favorite one throughout her long career, and she had never acted it without drawing tears from every spectator. Ten years had scarcely elapsed since her death, and that admirable, tear-pregnant voice still echoed in the hearts of many.

Mademoiselle Rachel knew well that she had to contend with these *souvenirs;* she knew, too, that she herself had been always reproached with a lack of tenderness, and she had re-

solved at any cost, even at the sacrifice of her finest natural qualities, to acquire those she had not. She forgot that she was not yet suited by time for the part of the daughter of *Pasiphœ*, and that the wife of *Theseus* is a woman of twenty-eight or thirty years of age. This attempt at forcing nature precluded all inspiration, and necessarily entailed constraint, fatigue, and a want of confidence in her own powers that reacted painfully on the audience. It was not until several years later that Rachel really displayed her splendid powers to full advantage in this *rôle*. On the present occasion expectation was disappointed. She played still in her own grand authoritative style, but effect was produced by the nerves, not the heart. Critics loudly complained that in *Phèdre* she was still *Hermione*, and that consequently, in the five acts of the former, she found but two—the third and fourth—into which she introduced the inflections, the gestures, the disdain, rage, and scorn of her favorite character; that, in fact, in lieu of studying a new part, she had merely effected a transposition of the old. To judge of Rachel in this character on this her first attempt, would be unjust: Rachel was not *Phèdre* until eleven years later.

On the 24th of April the long-expressed wishes of the public were gratified, and Mademoiselle Rachel appeared in a *rôle* of her own creation, in a character written expressly for her, as a heroine of her own race and her own religion.

Circumstances that to many would appear the most favorable for the actress turned out to be the most disadvantageous that could possibly have occurred. The tragedy of "Judith" was the work of a woman, handsome, brilliant, and fashionable, the cynosure of a circle composed of men of the highest order of intellect and of sparkling wit, the pet of the world of letters and of the world of fashion, herself occupying a high place in either sphere, the talented child of a talented mother, the wife of one of the omnipotent arbiters of merit, and the head of one of the chief organs of the press. The result may be imagined: if the tragedy was fine, it of course would be well supported; if poor, it would be supported *quand même*, and the failure laid to the interpreter.

The theme was ill chosen; it had already been tried by

others without success, but it was hoped that the talent of the authoress, supported by that of the actress, would make it this time acceptable. It must be confessed that it was scarcely possible to make a worse selection as to subject than this page cut from the Bible and dramatized. *Judith* could never be a popular heroine in France: this widow, introducing herself into the bed of a besotted barbarian, and chopping off his head with a great Damascus sabre, inspires more disgust than admiration. There is something indescribably repulsive in the apparent pandering to the loathsome desires of an enemy in order to butcher him in cold blood. Not all the splendor of imagery, not all the power of language, the smoothness of verse, or music of rhythm, could ever render the unfeminine perpetrator interesting. The heroine was said to be the counterpart of Charlotte Corday. No comparison can be established between the enthusiastic, the fanatic, but, withal, eminently modest, gentle, and pure French heroine, whose brow blushed even after death, and the bold virago who made lust the minister of vengeance.

This, one of the most atrocious stories contained in the Old Testament, was the last that a fair authoress should have thought of picturing. She should have reflected that actions suited perhaps to those remote times were not presentable on the stage of the nineteenth century. This scene of debauchery and murder, in which wine and blood are disgustingly mingled and poured forth together, in which treachery and lust are the actors, where descriptions of sacked cities, carnage, pillage, and revolts are the interludes, where there is not one glorious deed, one magnanimous action, one noble or interesting personage, where all is abhorrent to nature—this surely was no subject for the pen of a true woman like Madame de Girardin. It might perhaps have suited a member of the Woman's Rights' Convention, who, possessing none of the charms peculiar to her own sex, attempts to supply the deficiency by an affectation of masculine qualities. In France no sympathy is felt for these unsexed creatures. A French audience could not applaud such a drama. This unjustifiable crime, this kiss on the edge of a sword, this deadly hyena's embrace—faugh! the thing might inspire repulsion and horror, but the tragic elements of pity, terror, rage, fear, love, are all wanting.

There remains to examine by what miracles of poesy, by what efforts of genius it was sought to render this atrocious compound acceptable.

The first act opens well, and gives some hope of excellence; the second and third are below mediocrity. The plot and the characters denote a false conception, a lack of invention. The triple love of *Holopherne*, of *Phédme*, and of *Judith*, which the author evidently thought would be very effective, is not only cold and uninteresting, but it borders on the ludicrous. The scene where *Judith* bids the princes "down on their knees," in which the repetition of *à genoux!* was intended to be sublime, is laughable in the extreme. All the third act, with the intrigue of the pavilion between the two tents, proves a barren imagination. The invocation of *Judith* before the murder of *Holopherne*, intended to be a sort of imprecation *à la Camille*, is sheer nonsense. At the same time, the style, with the exception of a few verses, is clear and elegant throughout the whole play.

It was impossible that an actress, however great her ability, could do any thing with such a part: a character that is inspired by no strong passion, a widow without real grief, a mistress without real love, a fanatic without inspiration. No one is tempted to repeat the exclamation of *Racine* in allusion to the *Judith* of Royer: "I weep for that poor *Holopherne*, so traitorously done to death by *Judith*." None of the *dramatis personæ* excite compassion in Madame de Girardin's tragedy; if any one deserved pity, it was the actress condemned to bear so heavy a burden.

And this was the play that Rachel was called to present to the public! This insignificant characterless heroine was to be her first creation! To the deficiencies of the tragedy were added other circumstances that were considered harbingers of success, but which proved elements of failure. The play was, as is frequently the case in France, first submitted to the criticism of what is called a "private reading." A circle composed of men bearing the highest names in France for rank and intellect—such a circle as will never again perhaps be formed, the less so that the loved and lovely point of attraction is no more—assembled in the elegant *salon* of the

authoress. In the middle of this assemblage of critics, all devoted friends and enthusiastic admirers, the charming hostess, with large blue eye gleaming with poetic fire, light waving ringlets and heaving chest, in clear, musical, eloquent tones, pregnant with faith in her work, read very tolerable verses to ears predisposed to approve. It can not be wondered at that these friends, though bearing the names of Victor Hugo, de Lamartine, de Balzac, &c., should have proved but prejudiced judges, and should have lacked the prudence, the foresight, and severity that dispassionate critics and an unbiased public would bring to the task. They forgot that *Judith* would not always be presented to an audience of friends by an authoress surrounded by all the prestige of love and admiration, reciting with enthusiastic conviction her own verses, and who, carried away by her own feelings, weeps herself and draws forth responsive tears from her audience. The consequence was, that when these same approving friends found the real public cold, unmoved, and unadmiring, rather than acknowledge their error, rather than retract the mistaken praise so prodigally and injudiciously bestowed, they found it more convenient to shift the blame on to the shoulders of Rachel. That the actress in this ill-chosen part which she was called on to create was below her own level, that she played coldly, without soul, heart, understanding, conviction, or feeling, was true, but she had sufficient reason for this; it may be added that she was yet too young, too ignorant and inexperienced to "create" a character so unnatural; she could have recourse to no antecedents, no traditions; she was deprived of that to which she was accustomed to look for support, that without which she really could not act—the rapturous enthusiasm, the expectant admiration of the crowd. It is scarcely necessary to add that the result was the downright and complete failure of the play and the actress.

However unfortunate in the chief points of the tragedy, Mademoiselle Rachel, in outward appearance, was a splendid *Judith*. The good taste that had presided in the selection of her costumes was worthy of all praise. The mourning dress in the first act was chaste and severe. The costume of the other acts was resplendent. The dress, of a pale rose color,

embroidered with golden stars; the purple mantle, the Oriental scarf, covered with exquisite embroidery; the scriptural jewels that adorned her neck, arms, hair, and ears, formed a gorgeous *ensemble* that did credit to the taste and erudition of M. Chasseriau, the artist who designed the costumes.

During the performance of "Judith," one of those incidents that, though in themselves perfectly insignificant, often upset the best-calculated plans occurred. During the first act, when the hapless Hebrews are lamenting their fate and imploring the assistance of Heaven, at the most pathetic moment, a small gray cat, wearing the necklace of bits of cork indicating her recent maternity, crossed the whole length of the stage, gazing with astonished eyes at the *dramatis personæ* there assembled. This trifling incident called forth roars of laughter from the spectators; cries of *puss, puss*, imitations of caterwauling, and comic remarks, were heard from the pit, and even the wretched Hebrews, forgetting the terrible thirst they suffered and the woes that afflicted Bethulia, had the utmost difficulty to refrain from joining in the contagious merriment. The effect on the play was very unfortunate. It became impossible to obtain a quarter of an hour's serious attention from the audience, notwithstanding the presence of Rachel—*Judith;* her influence was great indeed, but with a Parisian public, always inclined to see the ridiculous side of every thing, it was quite counterbalanced by that of puss with her cork collar.

Mademoiselle Rachel, during the *congé* of this year, visited the south of France. Her reception was extremely flattering, especially at Marseilles, where it had even been arranged that a cavalcade of young men from the city should go some distance to meet and bring her into it in triumphant procession. Unfortunately for the plans of these enthusiastic young squires, the lady they intended to honor entered the city before the hour she was expected. The musicians of the Grand Théâtre were more fortunate in the accomplishment of their intentions; they executed their projected serenade under her windows, much to her and their own satisfaction.

The provincial press had enough to do to record the triumphant progress of Mademoiselle Rachel. The receipts of the Marseilles Theatre amounted to the hitherto unprecedented

sum of 8000 francs. The highest sum ever drawn there by the presence of Talma had never exceeded 5500 francs. At the close of every performance, an immense crowd accompanied her, with noisy and enthusiastic applause, to her hotel. At the close of the second performance of "Andromaque" she had nearly been the victim of the admiration of the hot-headed southerners. The wish to see her caused such a pressure of the crowd that she barely escaped being crushed; the interposition of a number of robust artisans enabled her to take refuge in a shop, whence she at last succeeded in reaching her hotel by the assistance of a commissary of police and a detachment of soldiers.

Every movement, almost every look of the *tragédienne* was trumpeted with all the amplifications that exaggerated praise could imagine. One little anecdote is, however, worthy of note, whatever may have been the motives that influenced the action. While Mademoiselle Rachel was at Lyons, she was told of a Jewish family that was reduced to the lowest stage of want. Having ascertained all necessary details of the case, Mademoiselle Rachel repaired on the following day to the sixth floor of a house in one of the poorest quarters of the town. Here she found a workman, his wife, and six children, without bread, clothes, or shoes. The gift of 300 francs which the visitor had brought for their relief called forth a torrent of blessings and fervent thanks. Not content with this munificent donation, Mademoiselle Rachel stopped at a shoemaker's on her way home, and ordered eight pairs of shoes for the poor people she had just left.

The presence of Mademoiselle Rachel at Lyons attracted numerous visitors from the adjacent towns. On Monday, Wednesday, and Friday, the days on which she performed, the public edifices were thronged with strangers whiling away the time until the hour when the doors of the theatre opened.

Rachel gave twelve performances in Lyons, and left that city on the 12th of August for Switzerland, where she was to remain some time, in order to rest from the fatigue consequent on her continued exertions. On the first of September she reappeared on the boards of the Théâtre Français.

In this month two other members of the Felix family made

their *début* on the stage of the Odéon. Raphaël, then seventeen years of age, and Rebecca, fifteen. The play was the "Cid," and whatever amount of intelligence, cultivated and developed by art, the precocious hero and heroine might possess, the effect could not but be ludicrous—Liliputians interpreting the actions and feelings of Titans—full-grown actors seen through the small end of a *lorgnette*, were the ideas they suggested in the beholder. There was no lack of talent in the young *débutants*, especially in Rebecca, though it lacked maturity; but both were evidently copies of their successful sister. Neither they nor any other member of the family ever attained, however, to her height.

---

## CHAPTER XIV.

### 1844.

"Bérénice."—"Don Sanche d'Aragon."—"Catharine II."

In January of 1844 the Théâtre Français revived the "Bérénice" of Racine. This play was written in 1670, when the power and glory of Louis XIV. had reached the climax; when all things had reference to the idol of the day, he who was the Alpha and Omega, whose power and whose amours afforded themes to the greatest poets, men to whom his smile was the highest reward, his frown the severest punishment. The episode of Titus and Bérénice in Roman history was suggested to Racine and Corneille by Henrietta of England: she who could so well sympathize with sorrows her own heart had experienced; she who could well appreciate the victory achieved by duty over love, for she also had been victorious in as hard a struggle. To the pure, chaste, and sincere love of Henrietta for the king, to the chivalrous and passionate devotion with which that love was repaid, to this mutual affection courageously resisted until esteem, admiration, and respect alone survived, we are indebted for this splendid elegiac poem, a model of elegant diction, of pure style, of exquisite poetry.

To the court of Louis XIV., that saw in every line an allusion, in every character recognized a portrait, "Bérénice" was full of interest. But this picture of refined and pure

love, which excited the sympathy and respect, which called forth the tears of the brilliant lords and graceful dames of Versailles, could have no interest for an audience of the nineteenth century, accustomed to the sanguinary horrors of the modern dramatic school, in which suicide, fratricide, bastardy, arson, are the themes; in which crazed imagination, invoking all the evil passions, seeks its heroes and heroines beyond the limits of Nature, in the realms of the Furies, or, degrading the noble Muse, drags her through the purlieus of crime to seek her subjects among the denizens of the bagnios and galleys. Tame and insipid must appear the chaste *Bérénice*, the noble *Titus*, to ears satiated with modern horrors. Neither the queen nor her imperial lover lose life or reason. They do not threaten to make the world rock, or to destroy the foundations of social order; they do not curse all mankind because they themselves are unhappy; they are uninteresting and spiritless; they prove themselves possessed of strength of mind that sacrifices the most violent passion to duty and honor, and this is too matter-of-fact to please at the present day. Nobody pities the torments of these separated lovers; the heroism, generosity, and delicacy of *Bérénice* find no admirers, and the grief of the master of the world, who loses a mistress he has loved already five years, and can choose her successor among all the women of the empire, is still less understood.

With such a change in times and opinions, it is not to be wondered at that when "Bérénice" was last revived, nearly fifty years had elapsed since that master-piece had been presented to the public, and that the revival was not a successful one. All the interest of former days had long ago died with those who excited it. The insatiate grave had closed over Louis and his courtiers, over the illustrious and virtuous princess who had perished by so foul a death, over the lovely and gentle La Vallière who had so fully expiated her one error: the chaste love depicted by Racine had ceased not only to be felt, but to be believed in.

Against this formidable coalition of circumstances the young actress was called to struggle. No one appreciated the obstacles. She was required to excite sympathy and enthusi-

asm, and the materials furnished her were the cold ashes of passions over which nearly two centuries had passed!

To all these objections may still be added a stronger one still as regarded the actress—the part of *Bérénice* was wholly unsuited to her. It is animated by one passion only throughout the play, a passion as gentle as it is strong—love in its most tender expression, unmixed with anger, scorn, resentment, never manifested with unfeminine violence. In this *rôle* Rachel could find none of the grand effects she made such fine use of in *Camille*, *Hermione*, *Roxane*, and portions of *Marie Stuart*. *Bérénice* personifies abnegation in its most sublime form, therefore *Bérénice* remains calm, dignified, and serene, even in her deepest grief. She is the heroine of a love honorable and devoted, of duty firm and unswerving; her heroism is not noisy and tempestuous, albeit it has its struggles. *Bérénice* is the very opposite of *Dido* or of *Phèdre;* she can not shed the same tears. This last shade of difference may appear of little moment, yet it is all-important. It could not be expected that Mademoiselle Rachel would succeed where not one of her own grand dramatic characteristics was brought into play, and it seems incomprehensible she could have undertaken the part.

Mademoiselle Rachel probably chose "Bérénice" on account of a fancied resemblance between the subject of that play and that of "Andromaque." *Bérénice* is, it is true, like *Hermione*, forsaken, but the causes that influence the lovers are as different as the characters of the princesses. *Hermione* is sacrificed to another love, *Bérénice* to duty; the widow of *Hector* is the rival of *Hermione*, that of *Bérénice* is virtue. The passions excited are very dissimilar, and the qualities that make an excellent *Hermione* must make a poor *Bérénice*.

Among the remarks of the press suggested by the performance of Mademoiselle Rachel was one that proves her political opinions at that time were somewhat different from the very democratic ones she found it to her advantage to exhibit four years later: "The lines *De cette nuit Phénice* were well spoken, only when she says *Le peuple!* Mademoiselle Rachel should utter the words with more enthusiasm. *Le peuple* is

not, in this case, the people of the *emeutes* and of the *carrefours*—it is the great Roman nation, and in this sense the contempt with which it is mentioned is out of place."

On the 17th of February she appeared in the *rôle* of *Isabelle* in "Don Sanche d'Aragon," which was never repeated. This, one of the inferior plays of Corneille, had neither in the plot or character one trait suited to Mademoiselle Rachel. It had been altered to suit the modern stage by M. Naptal-Planat, but was not more successful in its new dress than before.

In June the tragedy of "Catharine II." was brought out, with Mademoiselle Rachel as the heroine. There really seemed a fatality attached to her creations in the modern drama, and it may be said with truth that, with the exception of *Virginie*, perhaps not one of the characters written expressly for the great actress, during the whole course of her dramatic career, was suited to or worthy of her.

Poor Catharine II. has been the prey of novelists, dramatists, and poets without count. She has been dragged in the kennel, and made the paramour of low-born, brutal soldiers; she has been accused of perpetrating every crime, of stooping to every weakness. No pity was shown her. She was a monster—there is no rest for the wicked—was the argument of her persecutors; she shall be tormented by the pen of every scribbler, even to the end of time.

*Certes*, the Russians themselves must be very much astonished at the liberties taken with the character of the great queen of whom they are so justly proud. They must be amazed at the zeal with which these confounders of history pursue the memory of her who was a theme of praise with the philosophers of her day, the Queen of Sheba of the wise Diderot and the witty Voltaire, the elegant and refined woman who introduced into a barbarous court the courteous and polished manners of that of Louis XV.

As a woman she was weak, as an empress she was great indeed. In her soft, gloved hand, the brutal, rebellious Boyards were held as in a steel vice, while before her determined will the vast forces of the Ottoman Empire retreated dismayed, and the ancient limits of Russia were carried beyond the Caucasus. Her heart knew no fear, recoiled before no obstacle.

Her great crime, the one that has raised such a storm of virtuous indignation over her tomb, was that she put to death her husband. But of all the crimes of the kind with which the history of nations is filled, not one is so excusable, so justifiable as that of Catharine II. She acted in self-defense; her life was weighed against his, and she inclined the scale in her favor; between killing and being killed, she chose the former; she turned the weapon raised against life against that of her assassin. The insults and outrages she had suffered from that barbarian were such as no woman, especially one of her temper, ever forgives. Poetry, and history itself, have found excuses for far greater crimes than hers. Those who reproach Catharine with the murder of Peter III., a hideous tyrant, whose death was the deliverance of all Russia and the salvation of numerous victims already marked by him for death in its most fearful forms, forget that this fortunate revolution was accomplished with the loss of a single life that was the curse of a whole nation. Those who take such strange delight in painting her failings in the strongest light, leave her manifold great deeds in the shadow. This is a miserable, one-sided way of reading the annals of time, and an irreverent and silly jesting with its most important and solemn events.

M. Romand followed the beaten path, and treated this grand historical figure as unceremoniously as his predecessors. It is painful to have to analyze this wretched perversion of truth. In absurdity of plot, in want of taste, style, skill, imagination, poetry, rhythm, this author had outdone all the stupid productions of former years. Could his "Catharine II." be played in the style of a parody, as the "Auberge des Adrets" was once played, it would, without the changing of a single word, prove the most amusing farce that could be put upon the stage. It was not the fault of Rachel if she failed in a part where there was not a situation, a thought, a line worthy of a tolerable actress. But she made a great mistake in accepting it, and proved a great want of dramatic instinct, not to say taste, in so doing. Talma and Mademoiselle Mars never thus compromised their talents. The youth and complete literary ignorance of Mademoiselle Rachel might prove

some excuse for her; but no motive could be found that could induce a manager, a *comité de lecture*, to receive such a piece. Low indeed must be the degree of debasement and degradation to which literary taste was reduced when such a play was endured to the end. It is true that no hisses were ever heard then. The house, filled on "first nights" from pit to gallery with friends and paid admirers, has no seats for the real public. As for criticism, the cautious circumspection with which it touched upon the demerits of the work would be incomprehensible were it not to be conjectured that the amiable temper of the author and his success in two previous works had disarmed his judges. Criticism, however, while it respects the person and private character of an author, is bound to treat his works with severity, truth, and impartiality.

The sole aim of the author of "Catharine II." seems to have been the creation of a part for one person. By the adaptation of that part to Mademoiselle Rachel's peculiar line, and thereby affording scope for her powers, it was expected that she would give relief to the play on the mutual support system—a very mistaken plan in all cases where every other character is sacrificed to one.

The sum and substance of the play, disentangled and made clear—no easy matter—is the following: Young *Iwan*, who has some rights to the imperial throne occupied by *Catharine*, has been confined in a fortress from his infancy. In his prison he addresses his laments to the passing clouds, to the mild spring, to the mountain flowerets of Russia. The empress, in love with her prisoner, in the character of a young and simple-hearted ignorant maiden, visits him in his dungeon, and of course fascinates the unsuspecting *Iwan*. The situation has the merit of being a novel one, and, as such, does honor to the invention of the author—the despotic Czarina cooing like a turtle-dove in the dungeon of the cousin whom her revolted great vassals are at the time conspiring to seat on her throne. The love-making, being all on the lady's side, is also something unknown in the code of French gallantry; besides which, it turns out that the said lady is no longer free to offer her heart; she has already a master, and one as despotic as herself, who follows her like her shadow, and, when she goes

clandestinely to talk platonic sentiment with her young cousin, is at her elbow, dodging behind doors, eaves-dropping, &c.; and the great, the all-powerful *Catharine* tamely submits to being brow-beaten and insulted in the foulest terms by a tall brute of a soldier!

Truly Mademoiselle Rachel, accustomed to the high-toned respect, the refined delicacy, the submissive deference of the Greek and Roman lovers of Racine and Corneille, must have felt some surprise at hearing herself treated like a camp-follower. But this is the modern style of literature, and when, as it usually does, it chooses its heroines in the kennel, it may be very appropriate.

In the third and fourth acts we have quite as extraordinary flights of fancy. *Catharine* has resolved that she will have a decisive and public manifestation of *Iwan's* admiration. A grand *fête* is given, at which all the beauties of the court are assembled, and the Czarina herself, laying aside for an hour the external attributes of power, confiding in the sole prestige of her natural charms, mingles unostentatiously with the throng of her fair subjects. *Iwan* is introduced, and is then and there to say which of the ladies he will choose for his bride. If these are the privileges granted to state prisoners in Russia, they are not much to be pitied—a call from the empress in the morning, a sleigh-ride at noon, a ball in the evening, and a bride at his choice among the first and fairest of a court! No wonder *Iwan* imagined he was made a mock of for the amusement of the court. The rascally *Orloff*, *Catharine's* discarded lover, sets the stranger right: he tells him his pure maiden love is the imperial widow who has murdered her husband. *Iwan* thereupon insults *Catharine* before all the court with impunity. This tissue of absurdities winds up with the murder of *Iwan* by *Orloff*.

The character of *Iwan* is as mistaken as that of *Catharine*. Condemned to captivity from early infancy, his only accomplishment consisted in playing checkers. When *Catharine* visited him she found him half an idiot.

It was in the summer of this year that Rachel was tempted to take the part of one of Molière's *suivantes*. She appeared in *Marinette* in "Le Dèpit Amoreux." *Phèdre* and *Marinette*

in the same evening! To unite two such opposites in one person may be possible, but not in one like Rachel. Had Nature intended her for an amusing *Marinette*, she would not have given the attributes of the panting, trembling, passion-laden Greek queen; the noble, severe brow, the deep eye, the lip paled by emotion and fevered by the utterance of tragic anathemas, curled at times by scorn, but never parted by the light laugh. The sceptre, the crown, the dagger, the pallium and the royal mantle, can never be advantageously replaced by the bundle of keys, the scissors, the short-gown and petticoat, the smart cap and natty apron.

In the early part of July Mademoiselle Rachel left for Brussels. The six performances she gave there amounted to 40,000 francs, averaging 6666 francs each. The seats were all taken beforehand for the whole time of her stay, and the enthusiasm she created was no less warm than on former occasions. At Lille she played four times, each performance averaging 5000 francs, divided equally between the actress and the management.

It was not until the 28th of December that Mademoiselle Rachel made her *rentrée* in Paris. She played on the boards of the Grand Opera for the first time. The occasion was the benefit of Desmousseaux, an actor of the Théâtre Français.

---

## CHAPTER XV.

1845.

Reconciliation with the Public.—Classicists and Romanticists.—"Virginie."—"Oreste."

From the beginning of the year 1840 to the beginning of 1845, Mademoiselle Rachel, notwithstanding her great success abroad and in the Departments, had had much to contend with at home—*home*, that is, the home of the *artiste*—Paris. Some of the grounds for this have been already given; another important one remains to be explained. Mademoiselle Rachel was the organ of the Classicists, their support, their only hope. She was, therefore, warmly sustained by them. On the other hand, the partisans of the Romantic school, those who had de-

clared Corneille *antediluvian*, and Racine *obsolete*, attacked their works in the person of the oracle of the dethroned deities; they contested her triumphs, exaggerated her failings, and refused to see her merits. This party had allies in the very head-quarters of their adversaries—in the Théâtre Français itself. The management, while it offered to the public Mademoiselle Rachel with Racine and Corneille, was eager to take advantage of the vogue of Victor Hugo. The warmer the contest between the antagonistic schools, the larger were the receipts of the house when each assembled its followers to decry and condemn, to praise and applaud. The drama required melodramatic actors, and the indignant Classicists beheld the darlings of the theatres of the Boulevards, Madame Dorval, M. and Madame Gorgon, Madame Mélingue, invading the historic boards hitherto held sacred to the tragic muse, to the genius of Molière. Before these interpreters of a new faith every door was open wide, every barrier leveled, every obstacle removed; while, on the contrary, those actors who could have rendered able assistance to the classic school, who could perhaps have revived in the public a taste for the old master-pieces, were kept away under all sorts of pretexts. No talent that might attract the notice of the public was permitted to stand near Mademoiselle Rachel. Whether influenced by the avaricious feeling that grudged the slightest portion of public favor to another, or fearful that encouragement might kindle into flame some latent spark as yet ignored even by its possessor, she suffered no actor or actress of even tolerable excellence to appear on the boards with herself. The system was fatal, not only to all talent, but to tragic art. Whenever it was not her turn to speak, the public manifested utter contempt for what was going on.

The cool indifference, not to call it by a stronger name, with which Rachel herself gave the example of this conduct, was productive of incidents that excited the derisive laughter of the audience. She came on and went off the stage with so little care of what the other actors were doing that she destroyed all effect, leaving perhaps *Cinna* and the *Emperor Augustus tête-à-tête* in the most difficult moment, when the *emperor* has had his say, and the treacherous conspirator has nothing farther to add.

This system strengthened the arguments of the partisans of Victor Hugo and Dumas, and it required all Mademoiselle Rachel's talent to sustain the cause of the classic drama.

In 1845, after five years of struggles, during which the pens of her decriers had known no rest, she seemed to have exhausted their animosity. Even Jules Janin, changing sides with his usual suddenness and vehemence, was once more loud in her praise; from that time her reign was uninterrupted, her throne secure.

The spring of this year was marked by her appearance in "Virginie," a tragedy by M. Latour de St. Ybars, founded on an episode of Roman history immortalized by the genius of Livy. This play was an imitation of the "Lucrèce" of M. Ponsard. These oft-told tales, these worn out themes, are associated in the memory of our childhood's grief with many a sorrowful hour of penance, with many a tear shed, not over the hapless fate of the heroine, but over our own, that bound us to the wearying page when the bright sun and the song of birds—happy birds that learned no lessons!—wooed us into the free air to add our childish voice to Nature's hymn of joy. But modern times in vain proffered scenes as tragical, passions as violent; the bloody crimes it has pleased capricious man, reversing his own laws, to sanctify and to glorify throughout long ages, the suicide of the patrician dame, and the infanticide perpetrated by the plebeian father, the one inaugurating the Republic, the other overthrowing the power of the Decemvirs, both adopted as the pretexts, but neither of them the real causes of revolutions, these were the novelties Messieurs Ponsard and Latour St. Ybars chose to revarnish and vamp up as being best suited to the display of Mademoiselle Rachel's peculiar style of tragic excellence.

With what success M. Ponsard executed his task we shall not at present discuss. On his equally difficult one M. Latour St. Ybars exhausted all his flowers of rhetoric, all his collegiate erudition. Every reminiscence of ancient lore, every record of the habits, manners, and language of those partly civilized barbarians, the customs of the forum, of the battle-field, and of the interior of their houses, are pressed into his service; the household lares and the pots and pans of Herculaneum

and Pompeii were scrubbed up and crowded into the picture without regard to cost and with indefatigable industry. Modern works on ancient history, or on the Middle Ages, resemble the catalogue of the auction sale of an old curiosity-shop. Corneille and Racine disdained this clap-trap schoolboy erudition; they had a rich store of ideas, and cared not to show themselves Roman upholsterers, tailors, and milliners. Modern poets have greater abundance of words, yet all their crowns of oaken leaves, their verwain, saffron, barley, &c., &c., are not worth a fine Latin expression skillfully conveyed into French; real beauties are sacrificed to tinsel and meretricious ornament. The work of restoration is conscientiously performed, and the result has been about as beneficial to the present age as such restorations usually prove.

The first scene of "Virginia" opens with a monologue, in which the soldier's daughter, about to quit her paternal home to accompany *Icilius*, her betrothed, to the altar, invokes her household divinities. Here the poet found a capital opportunity to string together an astounding number of Roman formulas, articles of creed, points of belief, forms and fashions. The emptiness of this accumulation of sonorous old scraps of Latinity, gathered from the *Gradus ad Parnassum*, is not noticed amid the grandiloquence of the language that comes with a certain grace and propriety from the lips of the young Roman maiden, arrayed in her graceful garb, so accurately copied, and giving full relief to the lines with her proud brow and intelligent look. The old senator, *Fabius*, who comes to complain that he has not been invited to grace with his presence the nuptials of his client's daughter, is not lacking in eloquence, though the history of the war and the deeds of his house is rather lengthy and pompous, and seems, moreover, uncalled for under the circumstances. *Virginius*, on his side, is not to be outdone in eloquence: when reproached by *Claudius* with wasting his hours in domestic joys, he takes occasion to enumerate a series of ultra-Roman circumstances and particulars quite as foreign to the subject as his patron's harangue.

Thus urged, however, *Virginius* hastens to lead his daughter to the altar, leaving the enamored decemvir to inform his

client, *Maxime*, and the anxious public, of the means he has taken to prevent the marriage which he had apparently seemed to hasten. The maiden is seemingly beyond his reach. She is on her way to the temple, led by *Fabius*, escorted by her father and her promised husband, and preceded by the priestess of Vesta. But *Claudius* has taken his measures in time; he has the previous eve summoned the obedient *Flamine*, and commanded that a prodigy shall prevent the present union of the lovers. The father can not wait; he will leave Rome for the camp with his intended son-in-law, and the maiden will be left to the tender mercies of the wicked.

The scenes that follow show the decemvir has been obeyed — the gods have manifested their opposition. The return of the bridal *cortége;* the maiden driven from the temple by lying auguries; the old soldier parting from his child and committing her to the protection of his lares ere he returns to his military duties; *Virginia*, filled with sad presentiments, mute and motionless—all these have a fine dramatic effect, and constitute a good first act.

With the second act commences the criminal manœuvres of *Claudius*. *Virginia* enters and relates to her nurse how a beldame has met her on her way, and, in the name of *Claudius*, insulted her with the offer of his heart, his wealth, and his power. The passage in which *Virginia* rejects with scorn and indignation the gifts the tempter has sent in her absence are fine:

> "Et ces ornements vils qu'il m'ose présenter,
> Sont faits de ce métal qui sert pour acheter!
> Va rendre à Claudius tous ces dons, et sur l'heure
> Les présents de cet homme ont souillé ma demeure;
> Et ce serait blesser notre honneur et nos dieux
> Que d'y porter la main, que d'y jeter les yeux."

The interview that follows between *Claudius* and his doomed victim is a long one, and the death of her lover, of which he informs *Virginia* to prove to her she is free to return his love, is confirmed by the vestal sister of *Icilius*. At the revelation of the bloody catastrophe that realizes her sad presentiments and sundry threatening auguries, *Virginia* extends her hand toward the sister, and, fixing her dilated eyes on the

guilty decemvir, exclaims, "I believe you!" The effect of this sudden outcry of the soul was very fine as given by Mademoiselle Rachel; the intelligence, the indignation, the expression of passion in the eye of the young tragic actress gave to these simple words an extraordinary breadth and power.

Though the main argument is not developed in the second act, these preliminary events prepare the spectator for the more violent manifestation of the passion of *Appius Claudius* and for the final catastrophe.

The third act is skillfully and boldly written, though the poet diverges from the path of history to add new interest. The chaste maiden is not permitted to await the sentence of the judge in the hallowed and safe retreat her father's house affords. She must be exposed to the horrors of a night passed in the power of her licentious persecutor ere she passes from a life of innocence through the gates of a violent death. The *finale* of the third act, when old *Fabius*, anxious for the honor of his client's daughter left to his charge, whispers, "Take this steel;" and *Virginia* answers, "I am free," excited great applause. Another passage in which Mademoiselle Rachel produced an extraordinary sensation is that where *Virginia*, confronted with *Maxime*, who claims her as his slave, exclaims thrice, and each time with increased indignation, "He lies! he lies! he lies!"

At the rise of the curtain in the fourth act it is night, and the *iron lamp* casts its beams over the desolate home. *Virginius*, who has, in blissful unconsciousness, escaped all the snares laid by his enemies, returns from the army. Full of hope and joy, ignorant of the death of his son-in-law, of the danger of his daughter, he enters his home. The manner in which the evil tidings are communicated by *Fabius* to the wretched parent, the despair of the two friends, the terrible suspense while thought recoils and hesitates between the two equally to be dreaded alternatives of the death or dishonor of the beloved maiden, show dramatic skill. The return of *Virginia*, still pure, to the arms of her father, is very effective, and her narrative of the events of the night afford scope to the poetical genius of the author. The fine description of the wooing of the decemvir and the suicidical threat of the maid

came with splendid effect from the lips of Mademoiselle Rachel. Here she was in her element; the whole of this part was admirably adapted to her style.

In the fifth act the assembled people await the important decision. The iniquitous judge is in the tribunal, and *Virginia* will learn whether she is a free Roman or a slave. But the trial of the past night has exhausted her energy; fear invades her heart; she hesitates to leave her happy home; she trembles, she would delay; she feels that she is doomed; that to yon cruel man's will there is no resistance; from him there is no refuge, no appeal. She turns to her father, to *Fubius*, to her nurse, to all who love her, imploring mercy, protection. Alas! none can save, and she is compelled to bid a weeping farewell to her home — the home she knows she will never more enter. This beautiful passage was delivered in tones of deeper tenderness than Mademoiselle Rachel had hitherto been thought capable of expressing. Her accents of passionate, melting eloquence moved her audience to tears.

The fifth act is foreseen. The poet had it ready to his hand, written in the happiest style of the Roman historian. The merit of M. Latour consists in his having adhered so strictly to his text. He could not follow a better guide. He has had the good sense at this critical moment to refrain from all pedantic enumerations, all cumbersome accessories which would have marred the tragic effect of the simple fact. He goes straight to the point: his heroine, kneeling and imploring the merciful intervention of the people, is true to nature; she indulges in no superfluities of language; she weeps, and waits with resignation the decision, not of the decemvir—she knows no hope is there—but that of the people. Here ends the part of the daughter, and here begins that of the Roman father. The scene between the parent and child should be short, for the decemvir's lictor is listening; moreover, such agony will not bear prolongation: if the father hesitates, the daughter is doubly lost.

*Virginie.* Ma mère * * * il faut mourir.*
*Claudius.* Emmenez cette esclave.
*Virginius* (stabbing his daughter). Elle est libre!

The cry of the people, "Death to the tyrant," appropri-

ately closes the tragic scene. The success of "Virginie" was real—was complete. Since "Lucrèce," no modern tragedy had met with such acceptation from a French audience; but "Lucrèce" was in a few days laid upon the shelf, while "Virginie," sustained by the talent of Mademoiselle Rachel, was long played. In this *rôle*, which was admirably well adapted, especially in some of the scenes—that with *Appius Claudius*, for instance—to her powers, the actress rose to the full height of her excellence. She displayed her indomitable energy, her perseverance, her strength of will. She felt that she had her reputation at stake. She had failed in the creations she had hitherto brought out. Whether the failures were attributable to the plays or to the actress, the evil results were no less keenly felt by her, and she saw the necessity of proving that the fault was not in her, but in the materials given her. She felt her sunlight was paling. The public, ever ready to dispel its own illusions, to destroy the idol it had worshiped, was beginning to show carelessness and indifference. Some great effort was requisite to rouse it from a torpor which, long continued, would have proved fatal. Had she again failed, defeat would have severely shaken, if not utterly killed, her prosperity. She rose with the peril of the crisis, and, achieving the most glorious triumph, seized with firmer grasp the sceptre that was sliding from her hand.

The success of "Virginie" contented the public for some months. In June Mademoiselle Rachel carried it into Brittany. She spent her *congé* at Nantes and Brest. Her triumph was somewhat less agreeable from the fact that it was shared in Lyons by the actor Ligier, in whose praise the provincials were so enthusiastic that the Parisian critics were much amused. The idea of placing Ligier on a line with Mademoiselle Rachel fully warranted the ridicule with which it was visited.

On the 6th of June Mademoiselle Rachel took a part in the celebration of the anniversary of Corneille—a celebration, be it remembered to her honor, she had been the first to think of introducing. She was so charmed at this time by the success of *Virginie* that she forgot how inappropriate was the costume of this *rôle* to the circumstance, and appeared in it in the pa-

geant got up in remembrance of Corneille in lieu of choosing that of *Camille.*

During the absence of Mademoiselle Rachel her sister made her *début* at La Gaiété, in "Le Canal St. Martin."

At her *rentrée* on the 6th of September, the favorite again found her Parisian public cold and sulky. The play was "Virginie." The first act was received with indifference, but the talent of the actress, her evident wish to please, dispelled the cloud at last, and the plaudits were loud and prolonged. It was, probably, an excellent thing for Rachel that she was now never received at the very outset with premeditated applause, but was compelled to earn it by dint of talent and labor. She was obliged to study, and dared not play carelessly.

In this month she appeared again in *Phèdre*, a *rôle* she had not acted for eighteen months. The improvement she had made was already very perceptible, although she had not reached the perfection in it which she subsequently attained. The house was filled to suffocation. This was the case now whenever Rachel was to play, otherwise the Théâtre Français was a desert. There was no medium—the house was full or empty. "Phèdre" was much applauded, and the criticisms of the *feuilletons* gave her great credit for her performance in the difficult scene of the declaration, in that of the imprecations against her muse, in the scene where she comes on to die—in fact, in all the passages where there is more energy than tenderness she was pronounced admirable.

On the 25th of October she again played on the boards of the Opera House. The performance was for the benefit of Massol, and the play was "Les Horaces." During the first three acts the public was attentive, but encouraging; at the fourth the applause was tremendous. The effect this fine tragedy produced on the stage was partly attributable to the superiority of its acoustic construction. This point is not so much attended to where the house is not exclusively intended for music, and it is a great pity it should be so, as the enjoyment is much diminished at times by the difficulty of hearing distinctly in every part of the house what is said on the stage.

We have noted so minutely the fluctuations of public favor and the difficulties against which the candidate is called to

struggle as an encouragement to future aspirants whose patience and perseverance may be in danger of giving way before a discontented audience. The example afforded in this instance may prove useful to others. It is said that "faint heart never won fair lady:" the public is harder to satisfy, and far more exacting, than the veriest coquette.

The close of this year witnessed a vain attempt to resuscitate Voltaire's tragedy of "Orestes," which had not been acted since the year 1750. Rachel, tempted by the *rôle* of *Electra*, did not reflect on the innumerable difficulties she would encounter in bringing to life this dead play. She made incredible efforts, and only succeeded in galvanizing it momentarily. All her talent could not make it acceptable with the public: she spent her breath on cold ashes. The part of *Electra* is monotonous, destitute of grandeur or majesty; its passion is worn and threadbare, its terror and grief lack the semblance of reality: this spectre of the past bears an empty urn, and it was in vain that the actress who had evoked it endeavored to excite sympathy or interest in an audience astonished at its own indifference. *Certes*, had the play been almost any other, the case would have been otherwise, for on no other occasion had Rachel displayed the energy, the talent, the courage and perseverance with which, night after night, she endeavored to support this unfortunate "Orestes." She had studied well the character of the Grecian princess, animated by the one sole feeling—vengeance. Even amid the rapturous joy the recognition of her brother causes, the implacable, the ruling idea preserves its sway: she is already longing to place the dagger in the hand of her newly-found brother: it is the avenger rather than the brother she embraces. In the bitterness with which she replied to *Clytemnestra*, the cold haughtiness and crushing disdain with which she addressed *Egysthus*, the eager affection she manifested to *Orestes* bearing the ashes of *Plisthènes*, the one predominating thought is ever uppermost. The spirit of the Greek dramatists was better expressed by the actress than by the author.

The character of *Electra* contained in itself all the elements Mademoiselle Rachel could best use; her great powers had full scope, for here was every passion she excelled in express-

ing, while she suffered no restraint, and was compelled to no effort to curb nature or delineate the softer feelings. Here, if there are tears, they are the few burning drops impotent rage lets fall. That Mademoiselle Rachel rose to her full height in *Electra*, and that no character could suit her better, all the critics of the day allowed; but the public had declared against the play itself, and no effort could change that determination.

She had dressed her part admirably. Her cold, sad, gray costume, bordered with red; her slight, delicate arms imprisoned in iron links; her fixed, stern gaze, and brow full of strong will, gave her the appearance of a young Nemesis.

But all was in vain. She had undertaken an impossibility. *Orestes* was a rock on which all her talent was wrecked. The amount of energy spent here would have set up a worse play on another theme. The other actors, amazed and terrified at the determined perseverance of Rachel and the apathy of the public, hastened through their parts, eager to get off the stage. One alone seemed to share the anxiety, the impotent resolution of Rachel—the young Rebecca aided her efforts with the despair of a child who sees her sister drowning, and would rescue her at any cost. At one time, overcome by emotion, seeing Rachel's unavailing efforts, she threw herself in her arms with a cry of anguish so real there was no mistaking the poor girl's feeling. The house resounded with applause for some minutes.

And every time the play was given these desperate efforts were repeated, for Rachel had chosen it, and she would not be gainsaid—she would not admit she was wrong. Unfortunately, she bore within herself the worst obstacle to the continuance of this battle with the will of the public. Her frail organization was opposed to her strong will; her voice, exerted so valiantly, at times utterly failed her; the passion that burned within found no utterance. Alas! all this talent, this instinctive knowledge of dramatic art, this eloquence in its expression, all were hanging on a breath. Even then was foreshadowed the dread disease that was to make such havoc in that delicate constitution.

Mademoiselle Rachel might, perhaps, have succeeded in persuading her audience that Voltaire's wretched imitation

of the magnificent works of Sophocles and Euripides was worth the sublime works of Corneille—that this wretched verse was worth the polished, elegant lines of Racine, had she been ably supported. But the error her selfishness had committed was now visited on her own head. She had wished to stand alone in her triumphs; she stood alone to support this crushing weight. She fought for her *Electra* as the faithful fought for their vanquished gods, and found strength in the imminence of the peril; but the dastards by whom she was surrounded did not even make a stand for the defense of their own insulted altars, beneath the shelter of their own profaned temple. Under such circumstances, without an army, without captains or soldiers, in a bad cause, victory was impossible, defeat inevitable.

---

## CHAPTER XVI.

1846.

"Jeanne d'Arc."—Rachel in Holland.—The Théâtre Français a Land of Promise.—Dissensions with the Management.—A Soul of Fire in an Envelope of Gauze.—Mademoiselle Clairon and the Duke of Choiseul.—Rumored Conversion.—Cheap Proselytism.—Amenaïde without a Tancrède.—Death of Mademoiselle Mars.—Retirement of Joanny and Mademoiselle Georges.

In March of this year the "Jeanne d'Arc" of Alexander Soumet was revived, with Mademoiselle Rachel as the heroine. The annals of France present no finer subject for tragedy than Jeanne d'Arc. On no other page will be found such grand elements of inspiration; religion, loyalty, heroism, virtue, are all united here; yet no poet, either in past or present times, has been found to make good use of these splendid and abundant materials. There is not a poem or a tragedy in any language that does justice to the resplendent creature that casts so glorious a halo over her age. The fame of the heroine has received no new lustre, no confirmation from the degenerate lips that have undertaken to sing her praises. They have succeeded in dwarfing the more than human proportions of the figure they sought to reproduce; they seem to have looked at this grand image through an

inverted opera-glass, and to have given us the Liliputian statuette they saw there. Nay, among the most gifted children of the god of song, among those who could best have handled a theme worthy of a second Homer, one was found so lost to all sense of patriotism, honor, honesty, gratitude, and truth, so degraded in mind, so perverted in heart, so crazed by mistaken vanity, so sunk to the lowest depths of cynicism, as to spit venom on the immaculate fame of that sainted maiden-warrior who rescued his forefathers from the yoke of the usurper, who gave new being, new birth to France, and raised her children from the oblivion in which they and their memories had else perished. That one wretched poem suffices to stamp infamy on the name of Voltaire.

Of all the unsuccessful, weak, paltry trash that has since been perpetrated on this theme, M. Soumet's tragedy is perhaps the worst. This wretched compound of unskillful lies, trivial inventions, and childish contrivances could not be successful even when administered by Rachel.

In the soul-stirring pages of a prose writer—of a Michelet only—can we find realized our conception of the representative of all the good sense, if not all the courage, of the France of 1429. His pen, inspired by real genius, guided by the spirit of everlasting truth, has been found worthy to evoke this sublime image; on his palette alone have been found colors to paint the thunder-laden, blood-tinged clouds through which shone the star that led France onward to a glorious regeneration.

When from the grand prose of Michelet we descend to the puny, halting, miserable pathos of Soumet, we can not but recoil with disgust from any analysis of his production, and hastily turn away from these five acts, filled with gibbets, dungeons, Parliaments, and stakes. Though not a superior production, Schiller's "Joan of Arc" is still a master-piece compared to that of Soumet. The German poet has brought before us the whole life of the maid. We have the already chosen girl in the humble home of her childhood, placing on her fair tresses the golden helmet she has found, and dreaming of the English masters of the fair fields and towns of France, of the dishonored crown of her kings, of the Jezebel

queen-mother. She sees, she feels, she understands all the long, fearful series of treasons, bloody battles, defeats, pitiless massacres, devastations, pillages, and woes numberless and unutterable. The hand of God has lit within her heart the sacred and unextinguishable fire; she rises and follows without hesitation the guiding voice that cries out to her from the desert. This is better than mere poetry: it is historical truth, and herein consists the merit of the German author; herein, too, lies the crime of the degenerate Frenchman, whose touch contaminates or conceals these great records of the past. Who shall dare deny the divine inspiration when a nation becomes regenerate at her voice, and its dead hopes rekindle at her breath! The sunken and desponding people that had lost all faith in its king, its priests, and even in its God, hails the envoy of pitying Heaven, and recognizes her mission. She baffles the world-wise wisdom of theologians by her prompt judgment; women admire her modesty, men her valor, the people at large her saint-like beauty. We repeat it—the German poet has followed history, and found a road to every heart. The Frenchman followed the by-paths of his own petty invention, and wandered into the realms of obscurity and dullness.

Unfortunately, it was not the tragedy of Schiller that Mademoiselle Rachel was to present to the public; it was the nondescript work of Soumet, and she could not invest it with every quality it lacked, or conceal all the faults it had. She made as good use as it was possible of the materials given her. Her action was full of energy, yet she had the calm, the patience, and the dignity the character demanded. She looked remarkably well in her gold and silver armor, her coat of mail and gauntlets, and a too great consciousness of this made her commit the error of retaining it after the first act, forgetting that *Jeanne* should appear before her judges in the garments of her sex: her armor was one of the charges brought against her by the infamous *Bishop Canchon*. In the scene with the *Duke of Burgundy*, in the third act, she was admirable. In the death-scene she was a model of *statuesque* beauty, enveloped in the folds of the banner, and sinking, overcome by the pitiless flames; the banner itself,

however, is an absurdity, as contrary to good sense as it is to the truth of history. In the first place, no one can imagine how the French banner can be in the hands of the helpless prisoner of the English. What the poor victim really held is recorded. "She asked for the cross. An Englishman handed her a cross which he made out of a stick; she took it, rudely fashioned as it was, with not the less devotion, kissed it, and placed it under her garments, next to her skin."—("History of France," by M. Michelet, vol. ii., p. 152.) There is no doubt that, had the reality been presented, Mademoiselle Rachel would have made as picturesque a use of the rude emblem of salvation as she did of the banner, and the effect would have been far more pathetic. But that the actress had a great fancy for the theatrical effect she imagined she had produced, enveloped in the folds of the banner, was proved two years after.

In the latter part of May, Mademoiselle Rachel set out for Holland, intending to spend there and in England a *congé* that was to last two months. She was received by the phlegmatic Dutch with the enthusiasm that greeted her elsewhere—an enthusiasm which, at its pecuniary value, gave a result of 52,000 francs in 15 days. She performed in Antwerp on the 20th.

In Lille, however, her success was from some cause or other not as productive to the management as had been expected. After the fourth performance, M. Bardon, the manager, having exposed the situation of affairs, by which it appeared he had sustained considerable loss by the engagement made with her, Mademoiselle Rachel consented to give a fifth performance, the produce of which should be equally divided between the manager on one side, and M. Genics and her brother Raphael, who then accompanied her. She stipulated as a condition of this unwonted fit of generosity that the seats should be given at the usual prices, and that the subscribers should have a right, as on ordinary occasions, to their seats. Whether the Lillois still retained a lively sense of the injustice done them on former nights, or from some other cause of dissatisfaction, the house was not better filled on this last night than before, notwithstanding the concessions made.

On the following day Mademoiselle Rachel was attacked by what the physicians called sporadic cholera, and the symptoms were at first such as to excite great apprehension in her friends. Her prompt recovery, however, permitted of her pursuing her journey to London, where she performed twelve times in the space of three weeks.

The success of Rachel had, as we have already seen, developed in her brothers and sisters an irresistible vocation for the stage, and one after the other they were forced upon the management of different houses at handsome salaries. Raphael, who had made his *début* with Rebecca the preceding year at the Odeon, made his *début* this year, in the first week of May, on the boards of the Théâtre Français, in "Les Horaces." Sarah was at the Gaiété; even little Dinah, who acted the part of the child threatened with a whipping by *Argan* in "Le Malade Imaginaire," had a share in the spoils of the Philistines. Another child of Israel, Mademoiselle Judith, also made her *début* this year. It was jestingly remarked that the Synagogue was removed to the Théâtre Français. To one fortunate Hebrew family it had certainly proved a land of promise.

The continual exertions of Mademoiselle Rachel had told on her delicate constitution, and on her return to Paris in the first week of September she solicited a prolongation of her *congé* for two months, in order to take the rest she so much needed. To this request the management replied, with tolerable good reason, that if Mademoiselle Rachel had overworked herself, it had hitherto been to fill her own pockets, and that she could not expect the house to be the loser. The object of a *congé* was to enable the actors to recruit their strength, not to exhaust it. The dispute waxed high. Mademoiselle Rachel brought forward the usual excuse of illness, and could not, or would not play. The management made use of their right, and sent the physician attached to the theatre to ascertain the truth of the alleged indisposition. He was not admitted, and, rather than submit to what she denominated exactions, the actress sent in her resignation as *sociétaire* toward the close of September. This was the commencement of the dissensions between Mademoiselle Rachel in person and the

management. The blame could no longer, as during her minority, be thrown on her father. These quarrels, though occasionally healed, continued to break out during all the remainder of her dramatic career. The resignation sent in by Mademoiselle Rachel was merely intended to frighten the management into compliance with her demands. The threat was too ill grounded to be effective: the resignation was not valid. A clause of the decree of 1812, known as the Decree of Moscow, and which is the charter of the Théâtre Français, stipulates that when a *sociétaire* wishes to resign, the resignation must be notified "one year beforehand," and the notification must be also reiterated six months after. A *sociétaire* must have had the title ten years before he can resign. Mademoiselle Rachel had only had it eight years. She had been elected in 1842; but the title is retroactive, and counts the time from the entrance in the Théâtre Français. She had entered in 1838.

Notwithstanding this fit of the sulks, Mademoiselle Rachel came again before the public in October in "Phèdre." The improvement each successive year witnessed in her performance of this, the finest as well as the most difficult *rôle* in the classic *repertoire*, was hailed with delight by a numerous audience. Never had the applause been more frequent and sincere. It was on the occasion of her playing *Phèdre* in the succeeding month of November that the following anecdote was related:

The *tragédienne*, electrified by the breathless attention of her audience, had never shown herself so great, so sublime. Inspired by the genius of antiquity, she was the personification of this delirium of passion, this mad torrent of conflicting elements, exhaling in volcanic accents disdain, rage, love, remorse, this tortured daughter of Pasiphæ. Among those who seemed most deeply absorbed in the contemplation of this magnificent specimen of dramatic art, that succeeded in drawing tears for sorrows of which the subject stood back from the present generation a distance of thirty centuries, was a personage who, between the acts, divided with *Phèdre* the attention of the audience. This was the Bey of Tunis, a man yet young, with the intelligent look, the pensive head, the sad smile, so fre-

quently the characteristics of the Oriental. The fixity of his gaze seemed to denote that, notwithstanding his ignorance of the language, the eloquence of the countenance and gestures of the actress enabled him to understand the play. When the actress was recalled to receive the floral homage showered upon the stage, she could not help glancing at the prince, who, resplendent with jewels, was so gravely attentive to all she did and said. One of the persons present in his box, asking the Bey what his highness thought of Rachel, he replied, "It is a soul of fire in an envelope of gauze." The prince's answer was diversely reported, another version being, "It is the soul of an eagle in the body of a gazelle." The first is the most natural when it is considered what a frail, reed-like figure gave utterance to those violent passions.

The sending in of her resignation by Mademoiselle Rachel in a fit of anger brings to mind the letter of the Duke of Choiseul to Mademoiselle Clairon on a similar occasion, when that celebrated actress wished to give up the stage she so much regretted afterward. The minister's letter contained the following sensible advice:

"If I may be allowed to advise you, mademoiselle, remain where you are; believe me, and rest assured I speak to you as a true and loyal *confrère;* do we not both play the first parts on a great stage? with this difference, that you choose those you will act, and I am obliged to act them all; you appear and are loudly applauded, I am most usually hissed; and yet I remain on my stage. Imitate me, and you will not repent having done so."

About this time it was currently reported that, abjuring the God of Abraham and of Isaac, renouncing the creed of seventy generations, Mademoiselle Rachel was about to become a Christian. As is usual in such cases, every particular was minutely given: the sponsors were known; the day, the hour, the church, the minister had been named; the *catechumene* had been seen with contrite look, clasped hands, rosary at her side, going to repeat her catechism in a house that was also well known. The young neophyte was to receive as a christening gift from her godfather diamonds to the amount of 50,000 francs. A witty *feuilletonist*, recording this *newspaper* fact,

added, "Jean Jacques Rousseau became a convert for the sum of three francs in sous!"

Pending the confirmation of these reports, the subject of them was left neither quite a Christian nor yet a Jewess, hanging, like Mohammed's coffin, between heaven and earth.

In December Mademoiselle Rachel again played *Amenaïde* in "Tancrède." Five years had elapsed since that tragedy had been revived for her, but all her efforts to render it acceptable to the public were unavailing. Yet this "Tancrède," founded on one of the most charming passages of Ariosto's poem, is one of Voltaire's best plays, and is really full of interest. *Amènaïde*, the chivalrous heroine of the Middle Ages, half Oriental and half French, is a very brilliant and fascinating character; yet, notwithstanding her passionate love, her despair, and her splendid costume, she could not, even when represented by Mademoiselle Rachel, find favor with the public. Not that the actress lacked talent in this *rôle*, or was wanting in zeal; the fault was not in her. What was wanting was a *Tancrède*. When the knight, whose great deeds and passionate love constitute the chief interest of the play, has so incompetent a representative on the stage, the audience can not be made to accept it. The work has the effect of the play announced by the manager of the itinerant company as the play of "Hamlet" with the part of *Hamlet* left out. *Tancrède* might as well have been left out.

In the spring of this year the Théâtre Français lost three of its celebrities. Mademoiselle Mars, whose brilliant dramatic career had lasted nearly half a century, died in March of this year. She had retired from the stage some few years before. Joanny, the last remaining tragic actor of any excellence, the last of the *Horatii*, retired from the stage in the month of April. Mademoiselle Georges retired in the month of June. Her health no longer permitted her to undergo the fatigue that attended the discharge of her professional duties on the stage, but she opened a class of declamation. Among her pupils may be mentioned an actress of some repute in the United States—Miss Davenport, who took lessons of her in 1856.

## CHAPTER XVII.

1847.

"L'Ombre de Molière."—"Le Vieux de la Montagne."—"Athalie."—"Célimène."—"Cléopâtre."

The year 1847 was inaugurated at the Théâtre Français by the revival of Molière's "Don Juan" in its original form. The occasion was the anniversary of the author's birth-day. A sort of eclogue, written by M. Barbier, preceded the play. Mademoiselle Rachel and Mademoiselle Brohan, personifying serious and light comedy; *Mercury*, the shade of Molière, and a poet, were the *dramatis personæ* in this little piece. Mademoiselle Rachel and Mademoiselle Brohan were dressed in costumes so faithfully imitated from the Muses of the Fontaine Molière, they seemed statues chiseled by Pradier. Prevost represented Molière with equal accuracy of costume.

The success of "Virginie" led its author to write, and Mademoiselle Rachel to accept, another tragedy, "Le Vieux de la Montagne," which was brought out at the Théâtre Français on the 6th of February, 1847. Of this play we are tempted to repeat what we said of Catharine II.—if it had been acted as a parody, it would, without the alteration of a word, have proved a most amusing farce. Whether the exhilaration of success had rendered M. Latour careless, or whether his dramatic inspiration was short-winded, or from whatever cause it might proceed, he certainly produced a most soporific, dull, stupid play, destitute of style or grandeur, without one tragic element, without one interesting personage or event. The verse is such as any rhyming schoolboy could equal—flat, insipid, commonplace, showing sense constantly sacrificed to rhyme, and the latter not always successfully achieved. As for *poetry*, there is not a line in it from beginning to end. The events narrated are supposed to occur in a place and at a time famous in history—in a fortress of Mount Lebanon, during the first crusade of Saint Louis; but the *dramatis personæ* are of

no age and of no country; indeed, we question if such a set of double-distilled fools ever existed save in M. Latour's imagination. As Mademoiselle Rachel thought fit to accept the part of the heroine, we are bound to give some analysis of the tragedy.

*Fatima*, the daughter of *Hassan*, the chief of the assassins, has, during a skirmish, fallen into the hands of a knight of the Order of the Temple, the *Count de Sabran*. The new *Scipio* sends home to her father, scathless and ransomless, the captive of his bow and spear. Since her return the fair maiden droops and pines of some fatal malady not in the books of the learned leeches summoned to restore her to health. The sapient doctors, not being able to administer to a mind diseased any better than the modern sons of Esculapius, and unwilling to confess their ignorance, accuse the Franks of having administered some secret poison to the prisoner ere they restored her to her father. This is related by *Hassan* for the information of the public, to his prime minister *Benitza*, with whom, to judge by his familiarity, he appears to be on the most intimate terms. After narrating how quickly and safely he gets rid of his enemies with the help of his faithful band of assassins—by his own account fully justifying their appellation—the old villain begins to fear his many crimes are being visited on his daughter, and talks seriously of reforming, and making war openly after a more respectable fashion. He then inquires of his minister what progress has been made during his absence in a matter he has much at heart, namely, the winning the alliance of one *Ismael*, the chieftain of a horde of Bedouins. The minister reports that he, *Benitza*, has kept said *Ismael* in a state of paradisiacal bliss—that is, opium-tipsy—for four days, by way of conciliating his affections.

The next scene introduces the new ally just roused from his slumbers, and to him *Hassan* announces himself as a "prince and a prophet," the "shadow of God," *alias* the "Old Man of the Mountain." Notwithstanding the omnipotence these titles infer, he requires the help of *Ismael* and of 2000 of his lances, in requital for which service he will now and then induct said *Ismael* into the garden of Eden, *i. e.*, give him a cup of opium. *Ismael* does not seem much impressed with the

magnitude of the reward. He says "he don't want Eden, he wants Miss *Fatima*." To this point-blank demand the loving father instantly acquiesces—he shall have *Fatima*. Even this does not satisfy *Ismael;* he imposes another condition: the Franks have incurred his displeasure; they have killed his father; they have seen *Fatima* unveiled; he desires that *Hassan* shall forthwith order the heads of all Christian prisoners in the fortress to be chopped off and set as ornaments over the gates. The father-in-law elect, forgetting all his good resolutions, consents to every thing without the least hesitation, and, as he does not do things by halves, he summons three true believers, picked men, first-class assassins, gives to each a dagger, and orders the one to go and take off the King of France before the walls of Jerusalem; the other to stab the Grand Master of the Knights Templar; to the third he recommends his daughter's late generous host, the *Count de Sabran*. Fortunately for the prisoners in the fortress, the orders for the wholesale murder are hardly given when *Fatima* enters. In answer to her fond papa's rather plainly-worded and indiscreet question,

> "As tu vu, dans les murs d'Alep ou de Naplouse,
> Quelque Emir qui t'ait fait souhaiter d'être épouse?"

Miss *Fatima* replies she wants nothing. Finally, however, she has an indistinct remembrance that she has come for the purpose of asking the immediate liberation of the Christian prisoners: their groans prevent her sleeping. *Ismael* is rather disgusted at his intended's misplaced compassion, and while the point is being discussed, the doomed prisoners are marched across the stage. Among them is the young *Count de Sabran*. *Fatima* whispers to papa, "I love him." Papa respites all the Christians, and countermands forthwith the orders given to the three assassins.

In the second act we have *M. de Sabran* in his prison. In this *rôle* the author can not be accused of plagiary: this member of the church militant is entirely of his own invention, and much too good to find a counterpart in books, and still less in nature. We fear there are few feminine hearts that do not admire Scott's fine creation of the Templar; notwithstanding his sins, the dark lover of Rebecca, finds favor with

all fair novel-readers. But M. Latour's hero would accelerate the heart-beat of neither Jewess nor Gentile, despite his many virtues. This monkish knight in love with the charming pagan talks continually of the Cross, the Holy Sepulchre, chastity, eternity, and other edifying subjects. In vain the Old Man of the Mountain begs and entreats he will be so good as to accept his treasures and his daughter; in vain the maiden makes the same request; he is inflexible, inexorable. The complaisant father tells him he is free to follow his creed; that the pope will cancel his vows; and, as a last argument, that *Fatima* will die if he is obdurate. *Fatima* herself, who does not care a pin for Mohammed, offers to become a Christian. She is answered that her resolution is a snare of the Evil One:

"Votre cœur vous abuse;
Des esprits de l'enfer, reconnaissons la ruse."

In a word, he'd rather die than be made happy; he sighs for martyrdom, and demands to be immediately assassinated by the assassins. The father thinks the farce has lasted long enough—so does the public—and orders the stubborn young fellow shall have his wish. Meanwhile, as *Fatima* must have a husband, he makes up again with *Ismael.*

As for the Templar, he will give him one hour more to make up his mind—to choose whether he will endure happiness or death.

"Et quand, l'heure écoulée, il faudra que je sorte,
Je veux que du chrétien on ait réglé le sort,
Je veux qu'il ait *subit* son bonheur ou la mort."

Leaving the hero in this dilemma, the curtain drops on act the second.

After all this ado, no sooner is this exemplary knight alone with his confessor and the public—and *Fatima,* who is eavesdropping behind a curtain—than he sinks on his knees, and confesses he loves—a woman. Confessor seems to think that very natural—so does the pit—so do the galleries, whose approbation is rather tumultuous and derisive. That woman is *Fatima.* This the monk don't seem to think so well of; and the moment there is the slightest opposition, the moment he is bid, "Pray, brother, pray," the knight's love gets as furious

as it was cold when every one favored it. "He isn't a Frenchman—he isn't a Christian—he isn't a knight." He swears his soul belongs more to her than to God. He bawls it out aloud—so loud that *Fatima* is bound to rush in; the father and all his *cortège* do likewise; the monk is ready to ask a blessing on the pair; and there is great rejoicing, somewhat disagreeably interrupted by the news of the return of *Ismael*.

In act the fourth, *Ismael*, who, on the faith of his father-in-law's word, had gone out and obtained a signal victory over a powerful foe of the latter, returning with the spoils, is, and with good reason, quite furious at the change he finds. The old gentleman, rather puzzled between his two sons-in-law, tries to compound matters with the Bedouin by the offer of a tent, a horse, a sum of money, a castle, all of which are indignantly rejected. To settle the point, the two rivals get up a discussion on the merits of their several creeds, at the close of which the Templar offers to fight the Arab and two of his companions all at once. Notwithstanding the advantage offered, *Ismael* seems to think discretion the better part of valor, and cools down. *Fatima* makes her appearance in wedding costume, and the lovers are going to be united—we are not told in what church—when the three emissaries, who, in the first act, had been sent out on pressing private business, come to report themselves. Their master, who has a conveniently short memory at times, pretends not to recognize them, but *Ismael* insists on explaining; thereupon, one after the other, these agents of darkness deliver themselves of their fatal secret. The old gentleman vainly tries to make them hold their tongues; they are quite too proud of their exploits. One has caused the King of France to fall into the hands of his enemies; the other has killed the Grand Master; the third has sent the old *Count de Sabran* to his long account. Here's a piece of work. Of course, the Templar is mad with grief; he won't hear of *Fatima* or of an alliance with murderers; he is once more "a Christian, a Frenchman, a Templar;" he clamorously demands his prison, chains, and instant death. Father-in-law, out of patience, orders his head off for the third time. Then comes a terrible to-do between the loving father and daughter. Now that the knight has real cause to refuse his daughter, the old

land-pirate is quite enraged. This time he is ten times more exacting: the Templar must purchase life at a dearer cost: he must blaspheme his God, he must spit upon the Cross, and he must marry *Fatima* into the bargain. As a last argument to save the Christian, the lady draws her dagger; every one has the little professional tool at hand in this family. If the sword falls on his throat, the dagger enters the heart. Once more the order for his death is countermanded, and the fourth act is brought to a close.

It must be confessed the poor Old Man of the Mountain has some trouble to get his only daughter off his hands. She is a great deal more obstinate than her father. She will take none other for her husband than the Christian, who, on his side, can't make up his mind if he will take her: at first he won't, then he will, then again he won't, then again he will, and at last he is not quite sure whether he will or he won't. The doubt is cut short by *Ismael*, who comes to besiege the fortress; the Templar sallies forth in defense, conquers the foe, is mortally wounded, and brought in to die. *Fatima* falls dead by his side, and the curtain drops. It really is quite a relief to see the perplexed old man rid of his two troublesome sons-in-law, between whom he keeps his daughter going backward and forward like a shuttlecock during five acts, while he is himself in hot water all the time.

"Le Vieux de la Montagne" was performed but twice. The failure was too complete to permit of any fresh attempt in it, and Mademoiselle Rachel was fain to seek consolation in the old *repertoire*.

On the fifth of the following month the Théâtre Français revived "Athalie." The cast was as good as it possibly could be in the dearth of tragic actors the theatre was then suffering. Ligier, who had seen Talma in his great part of the high-priest, and had retained some of his fine traits, was really a good *Joas*. Beauvellet played *Abner*, Mademoiselle Rachel *Athalie*, and her little sister *Dinah* the child-king of the Jews. Unfortunately, her choice of this play again proved want of judgment; not, indeed, because the play itself was poor—none could be finer—but that the actress was far too young. To remove this objection Mademoiselle Rachel had

recourse to art, and succeeded to such a degree of perfection that the impression produced upon the spectators was exceedingly painful. To give a faithful representation of this almost centenarian Queen of the Jews, this daughter of Jezebel, whose crimes outnumbered her years, the actress had had a courage none but a woman, young and good-looking, could appreciate. Long gray locks covered her own dark ones; her delicate fair skin had disappeared under a vile coating of sienna, on which a steady hand had pitilessly traced the deep furrows of time; even the eloquent lips were withered and disfigured, while the lithe, graceful form was lost in the thick folds with which it was swathed to give it the stouter proportions of age. The thing was overdone: it was not *Athalie;* it was some hideous petrifaction, the mummy of a crowned witch restored to life. The effect was the more unpleasant that it was quite unforeseen. There are frequent instances of young and pretty actresses disguising themselves as old women, but the audience expects the metamorphosis, and the deception is not, as it was in this case, carried through all the play. They return in the happy form of youth and beauty in some of the acts. Besides, the disguise is never carried to so painful an extreme. The change in outward appearance seemed to react on her performance, which was feverish and unequal where it should have been calm. In several passages, however, she was very fine, and did full justice to this difficult part. In the last scene of the fifth act, where the queen feels herself lost and gives full scope to her grief, despair, and rage, when the maddened soul breaks forth in open rebellion against the God of the Jews, under whose mighty hand her power is annihilated, she rose to the full height of her grand dramatic genius.

"Athalie" was played at the Tuileries before the royal family, and the king honored Mademoiselle Rachel by expressing in person his approbation.

On the 5th of June Mademoiselle Rachel commenced her performance in Amsterdam. In July she shared with Jenny Lind the favor of the London public. She gave in London twelve performances, playing in succession all the pieces of her *repertoire* with the exception of "Athalie" and "Polyeucte," both of which were for some reason or other prohibited.

It was during this London season that the *tragédienne* attempted a character in which Mademoiselle Mars herself, the greatest *comédienne* of her day—and her day lasted half a century—Mademoiselle Mars, with her long practice and experience of the stage, her voice so perfect in its intonations, her charming smile, the aristocratic ease and grace of her manner, had not been completely successful in. The character of *Célimène*, in Molière's "Misantrope," requires a natural gift as well as great study and a habit of society. That Mademoiselle Rachel, with her eminent tragic powers, should have completely failed in the delineation of this admirable *ensemble* of grace, ingenuity, coquetry, malice, wit, sauciness, high-breeding, gayety, folly, and good sense, the most fascinating of Molière's heroines, is not to be wondered at. Even in London the attempt met with no encouragement. She knew better than to repeat it in Paris. Several tragic actresses have been excellent in comedy, but Mademoiselle Rachel was exclusively a *tragédienne*. Her great error consisted in never weighing well her powers or her strength.

On her return to Paris Mademoiselle Rachel accepted the part of *Cléopâtre* in Madame de Girardin's tragedy of that name, which was brought out on the 13th of November.

The only objection she made to the play was that the authoress had given so plebeian a name to the lover of the Queen of Egypt. She thought something better might have been chosen than *Anthony* for the name of the hero.

The number of times this oft-told tale has been dramatized should, one would imagine, discourage any fresh attempt of the kind. Besides the many *Cleopatras* that have been buried in the sea of oblivion as soon as born, and of which notices in dramatic catalogues alone remain to tell that ever they existed, there are extant above thirty tragedies in various languages, of which *Cleopatra* is the heroine. There are sixteen French ones, of which Marmontel's—a weak, frigid production in the old classic style—was the best. Of four Italian ones, that of Alfieri alone has won a distinguished place in point of literary merit. His heroine is, however, a hard, treacherous, selfish, ambitious, and wicked woman, less true to history and far less brilliant than the bewitching, fasci-

nating creation of Shakspeare. As a work of real genius, however, it ranks deservedly high. The Germans have "Octavia" of Kotzebue, that has not been able to keep its place on the German stage, or to win one in literature. With Shakspeare leading the van; with Corneille's "Pompey," so full of the noblest passages; with Dryden's "All for Love, or the World well Lost;" with Alfieri's "Cleopatra," full of thought, and power, and bitter passion; with the host of the unimmortalized that had passed, one would think nothing had been left unsaid on this threadbare theme. These considerations could not deter the French poetess. The following is the substance of the five acts she gave to the Parisian public; the reader may judge, more or less, whether the additions made to the text of Plutarch have increased the interest of the original.

The first act opens with a scene between *Ventidius*, who brings a message (never delivered) from *Anthony* to *Cleopatra*, and *Diomede*, her secretary. The lengthy speeches of these two subordinates take up almost all the act. They are plotting to prevent the illustrious triumvir from becoming the sworn vassal of the fascinating Egyptian Circe, and one would think, from what they say, that the lovers had never yet met. *Ventidius*, as a Roman, is justified in fearing the ascendency of *Cleopatra;* he would not the neglected sceptre of the world should be left to fall into the hands of *Octavius:* while power is equipoised between the two rivals, Rome is tyrannized over by neither. The treachery of the Greek (his name and conduct lead one to infer his nation) has no apparent motive. The worthy pair freely discuss the faults of their respective masters. They inform each other and the public—*Ventidius*, that *Anthony* is a vain, weak prodigal, besotted libertine; *Diomede*, that *Cleopatra* is an enchantress, who subjugates the world, and is the slave of her own low passions.

This dialogue gives the authoress an opportunity to bring in all the scraps of historical lore the French are so fond of introducing in their tragedies on ancient subjects. The manners and customs of Egypt are brought in: the voyage of Marc Anthony from Italy to the East; his mad prodigality, that distributes the plate from his table to his flatterers, and

rewards with the gift of a house the cook who has invented a savory sauce, are narrated. *Ventidius* seeks to learn some little peccadillo of *Great Egypt*, some secret, the knowledge of which will give him the power of dissolving, when he thinks fit, the spell it is supposed she will cast round *Anthony*. *Diomede* readily furnishes him with this secret power. A Greek slave, a workman on the wharves, had dared to love the queen, nay, to declare this love, and offer his life for one hour's return from her. The queen had smiled; that smile was the acceptance of his love and the seal of his doom. The hour has now come, the slave must die; a subtle poison and the waters of the Nile will obliterate all remembrance of this passing fancy, and the world will never learn that *Cleopatra* could stoop so low.

Even while they tell this fearful tale of love, murder, and suicide, the slave enters; he grasps the cup in an ecstasy of delirious love, too happy that he has so cheaply purchased the remembrance of such bliss, and, after an invocation, in twelve stanzas, to Death, praying he may, even amid hell's tortures, preserve his memory green, he quaffs the fatal poison, and drops, to all appearance, dead. At this moment the conspirators re-enter with a leech, who has a sovereign remedy, if used in time, that will counteract the poison, and they bear off the still living body to be made an instrument of when required. All this plot is agreed upon and carried into execution at the very door of the queen's apartments: neither she nor her enemies take too much trouble to keep their secrets from each other.

The *Cleopatra* of Corneille in his "Death of Pompey," the *Cleopatra* of Shakspeare, each modeled on that of history, is the woman who uses her sovereign beauty, as a conqueror does his sword, to bring to her feet the masters of the world. Ambition is the ruling passion: she subjugated Pompey and Cæsar, enslaved Anthony, and punished herself with death for having failed to conquer Octavius. Madame de Girardin's *Cleopatra* is a Messalina on the pattern of Victor Hugo's apocryphal *Marguerite de Bourgogne*, only she is something baser and more degraded, but she gets rid of her low amours in a similar way. The poet should resemble the bee, and

gather from the rich stores of history whatever may be used to best advantage for the benefit of mankind. He has no right to leave, like some foul reptile, a slimy trail over her treasures.

In the second act, the Queen of Egypt, reclining on her couch in all the pomp of Eastern royalty, is surrounded by her sages and scientific men. The high-priest of Hermes is reading a passage from the sacred book, by which we are inducted into the mysteries of the Egyptian cosmogony and theogony. We learn that *Athyr* is Chaos, darkness profound, the bed 'neath the waters in which the world slumbered; that *Pirami* is the day, the radiant spirit; *Kneph* is the creator, father of all the gods. *Phta*, his son, the god of fire, is the king of thunder, and has created heaven and earth. *Typhon* is the spirit of evil; that of good is *Osiris*, the brother and divine husband of the immortal *Isis*. *Toth*, the revealer, invented writing: *Toth* knows all the secrets of nature. *Tméi* is justice, *Athor* is beauty, and both uniting produce truth. *Amethi* is the abyss to which souls descend, &c., &c.

The queen gives orders, resolves the different questions in abeyance in a very business-like manner, and, dismissing her court, remains alone with *Charmion* and *Iris*. From her terrace she watches for the arrival of *Anthony*, and gives vent to her passionate fondness in accents that betoken no qualms of conscience for the crime she has so lately committed. That heart has evidently never had room for any but one feeling, and it is hard to reconcile its impatient yearnings for the presence of *Anthony* with the slavish inclination attributed to her. The speech in which she complains of the drear and heavy existence she leads in that land that has no spring, no autumn, no winter; where the foot feels beneath the slumbering earth its generations of motionless mummies; where, as in a land of endless murder and of endless remorse, the work of the living is the embalming of the dead, and the most beautiful ornaments are its tombs, is very fine. *Anthony* comes at last, but only to take his leave. He has been told the story of the slave; but, though his jealousy and his anger are excited, and give him courage to leave the queen, he makes no charge, gives no vent to his secret feelings: this is unnatural

and very inconsistent with the violence of *Anthony's* temper. He promises to return in two days; he goes only to concert with his friends in the port. While the queen is watching the vessels in the port, an arrow, to which is attached a note, falls her feet. The note contains advice of the real purpose of *Anthony*, who is gone to make friends with *Octavius Cæsar* and to marry *Octavia*. The enraged queen will follow her recreant lover, and snatch him from her rival's grasp; she will go in the disguise of a slave; she will see this beauty that has been weighed against hers and borne away the prize! The scene in which the queen questions *Diomede*, who had seen *Octavia* in Rome, as to her rival's looks, is a very poor imitation of Shakspeare's scene between the queen and the messenger who announces *Anthony's* marriage.

The third act opens at Tarentum, where *Anthony*, already repentant of his new bonds, accuses *Ventidius* of having calumniated *Cleopatra*. The slave has not turned out the willing tool he was intended for. When questioned by *Anthony*, he has denied all, and, accusing *Diomede* of an attempt to poison the queen, has ascribed his own apparent death to his having drained unconsciously the poisoned cup meant for her. He has been brought back to life to serve the vile purposes of his treacherous savior, and that is all. The enraged triumvir prepares to return to his regal love. There is a short scene with his lawful lady, and one between the brother and sister; the last, another pale copy of the English poet. There follows a very short scene between *Octavia* and the new slave, in which the latter remains mute. The explanation given to the Roman mistress is that the girl is of Athens, and speaks not the language of this land. After a soliloquy of *Cleopatra*, in which she recognizes and envies the power of virtue's charms in the person of the lawful wife, vowing she too will win the respect and honor mankind attributes to them; that she will efface all traces of the past—a spectre of that past arises before her affrighted eyes—the poisoned victim of the first act enters. An explanation follows; the treacherous plans of her foes are disclosed, and the queen is assured of the devotion of one vigilant friend. If he has consented to live, it was to watch over and render vain every attempt against

her—the warning note that told of the marriage of *Anthony* was his. This devotion seems to excite no other feeling in *Cleopatra* than one of contemptuous surprise. To this tale of devoted passion—to his exulting assertion that "C'est avec volupté, que je mourrais pour toi!" she answers, "Poor fool!"

Indeed, not a word falls from the lips of the queen during five acts that justifies the story of the passing fancy, and we are inclined to think with *Anthony*, "T'was a vile slander;" as for the slave, he was subject to strange hallucinations. There are one or two very charming passages in this scene. Answering *Cleopatra's* fear of being forgotten by *Anthony*, the slave says,

"Est ce toi qu'on oublie?
Va, tu ne connais pas la force d'un regret,
Ni la tenacité d'un dévorant secret.
On peut vivre sans pain dans des murs qu'on assiége,
On peut vivre sans feu dans déserts de neige,
On peut vivre sans eau dans le sable Africain,
On peut vivre sans air dans l'antre de Vulcain,
Mais dans cette démence où ma tête est bercée,
On ne pourrait vivre un jour sans ta pensée!
Un jour sans t'évoquer, sans t'appeler vingt fois,
Sans chercher à surprendre un accent de ta voix,
Sans aspirer l'air pur que ta bouche respire,
Sans se courber joyeux et fier sous ton empire,
O, reine, ne crains rien, il t'aime, et plus encor
L'avare n'a jamais dédaigné son trésor,
Et celui qui t'aime n'a ni repos ni trève,
Il n'a plus qu'un espoir, il n'a plus qu'un seul rêve,
C'est de vivre pour toi, de te donner ses jours,
Et s'il souffre, sa joie est de souffrir toujours."

[*Cléopâtre* (*avec une joie triumphante*).

"Il reviendra!" . . . . . .

*L'Esclave.*

"Tremblant, redemander sa chaine,
Il t'aime, il t'aime encor, je le sens à ma haine.
Tu peux me croire, moi, son tourment est le mien;
Va, lis dans mon amour les promesses du sien."

*Cléopâtre.*

"Mais n'est ce pas sa voix? j'ai cru la reconnaître."

*L'Esclave.*

"Esclave, cache toi, voici venir le maître!"

A very short and pretty scene follows between *Anthony* and *Cleopatra*. They depart together, leaving *Octavia* to weep and exclaim,

> "En vain je veux me résigner,
> Je donnerais tout, rang, fortune, renommée,
> Pour le honteux bonheur d'une maitresse aimée!"

The rivals thus made to envy each other, the mistress that follows the world-honored title of wife—the wife the happiness of being beloved, even though that happiness be purchased with shame—is very good, if not new.

In the fourth act the Battle of Actium has been fought—the world has changed masters; there are no more banquets, no *fêtes*, no Oriental sun gilding the orgies of Mars and Venus: all is blank ruin and despair. "Fortune and *Anthony* part here—the star is fallen.' The remainder of the play is a close imitation of Shakspeare, in all the scenes of the despair and death of *Anthony* as well as the death of *Cleopatra*, with the exception that the countryman who in the English play brings the "pretty worm of Nilus," in Madame de Girardin's is the slave of the preceding acts, who, jealous of his cruel mistress's honor, brings her the means to mock the power of Cæsar. The authoress, compelled to suppress the untranslatable beauties of Shakspeare, has endeavored to supply their place by the introduction of a feature copied from Dryden—the scolding-match between the wife and the mistress. Shakspeare carefully avoided bringing the rivals together: there was the danger of lowering the interest in the heroine by that which the audience must take in the pure wife neglected for no fault of hers. Dryden has avoided this, it is true, by making *Octavia* so cold and unamiable a character that no one cares for her, but he has done so at the expense of morality. Madame de Girardin has, in the scene between the mistress and the wife, made the latter more refined by far than Dryden's, but no less cruel. When the queen and her attendants are lamenting the death of the great triumvir, calling him thrice in accordance with the Roman custom, another voice suddenly echoes the despairing cry, *Octavia* is come to claim the remains of him whose heart was never hers. In the name of his country, of his sons, the

wife claims that the victim be given up to the vengeful gods of Rome. After a scene of mutual recriminations, the widow, who has the advantage of belonging to the victorious party, aided by her guards, bears off the body, and the mistress is left to follow the soul.

*Octavia* was evidently the pet personage of the authoress, and for her *Anthony's* worst crime is his criminal love—a crime for which his subsequent misfortunes are only a just expiation of the contempt he has shown for the connubial tie. Every attempt has been made to render the Roman matron more interesting than her Egyptian rival, but in vain. The threat of *Octavia* at the close, "I will live to see thee our slave—to see thee chained to *Octavius's* conquering car—

"Je vivrai pour te voir notre esclave,
Pour te voir attachée au char vainqueur d'Octave"—

is mean and unfeminine. This ungenerous treatment of a conquered foe, this disrespect for the fortunes of fallen royalty, contrasts with the calm, deep grief of the queen, who bids her attendants allow *Octavia* to enter:

"Elle l'amait aussi, laissons la le pleures."

The queen is right when she tells her proud rival that she will not follow her lord, for her grief is too noisy to kill—the grief that kills is less proud:

"Va, ne te flatte pas; toi, tu pourras survivre,
Et tu pleures trop haut pour mourir de ton deuil,
Une douleur qui tue est moins folle d'orgeuil,
Tu vivras."

With the exception of the introduction of one new personage—the slave, who is in himself a fine poetic creation, though he debases the queen, there is nothing new in Madame de Girardin's *Cléopâtre.* The delineation of the heroine's character is neither strong nor spirited. The choice of a theme that had been already chosen by the great master, continually recalls the vivid coloring, the fiery force, the bold vigor, the numerous flashes of nature contained in the astonishing master-piece of that gigantic intellect, and makes the poor imitation, by comparison, more dwarfish still.

Mademoiselle Rachel appeared in "Cléopâtre" on the first night of her *rentrée.* Very unsuited to her stately, dignified,

imperious attitude, so Greek, so antique in its severity of outline, was the character of the soft, languishing Egyptian, all love, all voluptuous impatience, doubting in her anxiety, her fretful jealousy, even the power of her charms. This languishing child of the East could find no fit representation in Mademoiselle Rachel. When the curtain rose at the second act on the Queen of Egypt, who had dressed her part superbly, the sight was very grand, and proved the taste and care with which the tableau had been got up. The costume of Rachel was gorgeous in the extreme, and nothing was overdone. Amid this profusion of gold-embroidered tissues, bracelets, necklaces, ear-drops, stomachers, this dazzling mass of diamonds, rubies, emeralds, and pearls, the spectators' attention was fixed on the unsurpassed elegance, the sculptural dignity of her attitudes. Reclining on this couch of Tyrian purple, she listens with divided attention, for her thoughts are of *Anthony*, to the precepts the high-priest reads from the unrolled papyrus.

In December Mademoiselle Rachel absented herself, on account, she alleged, of illness, and "Cléopâtre" was stopped after it had been acted but eight nights. It was bringing in about 4000 francs each night. This absence from the stage lasted three months.

---

## CHAPTER XVIII.

### 1848.

Mademoiselle Rachel and Mademoiselle Georges.—"Cléopâtre and Rodogune."—Influence of Revolutions on Actors.—Talma and Laïs.—Influence of the Revolution of 1848 on Dramatic Literature and Theatricals.—Old Things new Named.—M. de Lamartine's rejection of the Red Flag.—Suggestions of a Workman on Theatricals.—Béranger on the Revolution.—A Political *Tragédienne*.—"La Marseillaise."—*Le Peuple* of Mademoiselle Rachel in 1844 and in 1848.

This year, so eventful for France, was, for Mademoiselle Rachel, the closing one of that period of toil and struggle through which every great artist must pass to approve the talent that none may dare contest—to conquer the position

that none may venture to dispute. It was during this year, too, that she committed one of the greatest mistakes in her life. Not content with the high honors she had earned, with the admiration of the refined, of the educated, she endeavored to win popularity among a class whose approbation true genius never courts. To obtain the short-lived fame that rests on the ever-changing decisions of a mob, she turned her back on those who had supported her throughout her career: she abjured all gratitude, she threw her laurels at the feet of the populace, she ministered to the angry passions of a crowd—she *chanted*, to use the expression of her admirers, the "Marseillaise."

Illness, reported to be very serious, had been alleged by Mademoiselle Rachel as a reason for not playing during the first month of this year. To give new interest to her reappearance, which was announced to take place on Friday, February 25, in the "Cléopâtre" of Madame de Girardin, a rumor was circulated which, had it been confirmed by the event, would have done infinite honor to her heart. It was said that, to beguile the tedium of a long convalescence, she had studied the part of *Rodogune*, in Corneille's tragedy of that name, and that her first visit on her recovery had been to Mademoiselle Georges. "I am come, my *dear sister*," said the younger to the elder star, "to say I have learned *Rodogune* for your sake, and will play it, if you will, to your *Cléopâtre;* I am fully convinced we shall be successful."

These were noble words; this was indeed rendering unto Cæsar that which was Cæsar's. The circumstances of Mademoiselle Georges were such at that time that could she, by her reappearance in a character deemed one of her best, and with the attraction of the present favorite of the public, have brought full houses for a few evenings, the result would have been the addition of much comfort to her declining years. But the kind offer, if ever made, was, like many others of the eminent *tragédienne's*, followed by no performance. Indeed, the poor grace with which, in the following year, she responded to a call on her services made by Mademoiselle Georges, scarcely corroborates the report of the gratuitous offer of this.

On the 13th of March Mademoiselle Rachel made her *rentrée* in *Camille* of "Les Horaces." The tragedies of Corneille,

full of patriotic sentiments, of noble deeds, are peculiarly suited to periods of popular commotions. The spectators seek on the stage the representation of the feelings by which they are themselves actuated, and the actors, entering into the spirit of the reality, communicate its life to the fiction in which they act. During the first Revolution, Talma, carried away by the torrent, shared its errors and its enthusiasm. He not only flattered the public taste by the tragedies of "Charles IX." and the "Death of Cæsar," but he also carried his republican manifestations into private life; he and his friend David, the celebrated painter, used to walk in the galleries of the Palais Royal in the dress of Roman consuls!

As some excuse for the eccentricities of genius, it must be borne in mind that in France, and more especially in Paris, the stage is so closely identified with the habits, manners, and customs of ordinary life, so interested in the variations of public opinion and in the great national events, that it is very difficult for the actors to forbear giving way to the impressions of the moment amid revolutionary tumults.

At certain epochs it is in the allusions the plays of the classic *repertoire* offer that public feeling seeks a vent. At others —and then the government itself is the accomplice of the audience—the popular opinions, the patriotism of the day, are expressed in plays written to suit the circumstances and calculated to excite a paroxysm of zeal.

In such cases it is not surprising that the sort of electric current that is then established between the stage and the public should reach from the latter to the former, and that the actors should in their turn feel in earnest the passions of which they are the interpreters, and which they are not only to express, but also to excite in their hearers.

Nor must it be forgotten that every thing violent, sudden, out of the common line, is likely to seduce the imagination of artists. The themes they are most conversant with on the boards are events that overthrow empires and raise new thrones on the ruins of the old. Hence it is natural that those who spend the better part of their lives in this tragical atmosphere, whose minds are constantly dwelling on the vicissitudes of fortune, should readily fall into the wake of a

real revolution, and become its interpreters, its organs, more especially when they are certain thereby of increasing two-fold the applause attributed to their talent.

This is the only explanation that can be found for the absurd masquerade of Talma, for the illuminism of Laïs, the famous singer, whose exquisitely sweet and melodious voice, uttering the ferociously energetic stanzas of the "Marseillaise" on the boards of the Grand Opera, caused all the audience to fall on their knees.

The aberrations of these men had, however, a noble source; the foot of the invader was on the soil of France, and the indignant land was heaving as in the throes of an earthquake. Every heart was inspired, every arm was nerved, every brain was fevered by the magic words *gloria* and *patrie*. No such incentives existed in 1848; and when Rachel, whose waking hours were haunted and whose sleep was troubled by the wish to imitate the follies of her illustrious predecessors, attempted to do likewise, she had the misfortune to excite hates that had no object, to call down vengeance where there was no motive, and to insult foes that were absent or no longer in existence. Talma and Laïs had before them a foreign invasion; Mademoiselle Rachel was in the presence of the most absurd and disorganizing saturnalia that ever found a place in the history of nations.

To understand the state of things with regard to theatricals at that time, some explanation of the influence the Revolution had on them is necessary.

In France, the people—that people that may with truth be proclaimed one of the happiest and one of the most mildly governed on the face of the globe—imagine, at every revolution, that they have at last thrown off the yoke of the most frightful despotism, that they are entering on a new era of happiness and of liberty; the past was the age of iron, the future is to be the age of gold. The amount of insane hopes, wild delusions then entertained is beyond conception. Every thing in the fallen *régime* was wrong, every thing in the new will be perfect. The first thing to be done is to change the name of the things; old ones are thus supposed to be regenerated, to have changed their nature; the Monarchy becomes

a Republic, the Gendarmerie is metamorphosed into the Garde Urbaine or Municipale, the Sergeant de Ville is a Gardien de Paris. Uniforms are turned right side out, and a vast number of functionaries are dismissed. When all these wonderful improvements and reforms have been effected, the groundwork remains unchanged, and, if examined, will be found immovable. After the lapse of a few months, during which a great deal of zeal has been displayed, and no little confusion, cost, and trouble have been occasioned, all things fall back into the old routine, into the gentle, calm repose of the past.

The saturnalia of 1848, for that popular tumult can not be called a revolution, were, more especially than any other epoch, characterized by chimerical expectations and extravagant visions. Every institution constituting a portion of the basis of society was the subject of discussion and animadversion, and more or less shaken to its very foundations. "*The possession of property is theft*," "*the right to labor*," communism, socialism, workmen's association, *en commandite*, emancipation of women, and many, many other similar follies, will witness to posterity the insanity, the delirium of that strange epoch.

The stage, that important element in the life of the Parisians, could not escape in the general catastrophe. The effusions in which the partisans of the Revolution threw out their views of reform as applicable to theatricals are curious even at this short distance of time.

The Revolution broke out, conquered, and triumphed during the 24th, 25th, 26th, and 27th days of February. No later than the 28th the government that revolution had established gave its attention to the theatres of the capital—it changed their names. The fact is alluded to in the following glowing terms, in a theatrical bulletin of the day, by one of the warmest adherents of the party in power:

"The revolutionary and patriotic enthusiasm is taking possession of all hearts. The theatres, reopened this evening, are crowded. Every where the notes of the 'Marseillaise,' and those of the energetic hymn of our new revolution, 'Mourir pour la patrie,' rejoice our ears.

"The Théâtre Français from this day takes the name of 'Théâtre de la Republique.' The Opera is now the 'Théâtre

de la Nation'. * * * * * * * Patriotic plays are every where rehearsing".

This was the state of things on the day following that on which M. de Lamartine, importuned by the people at the Hotel de Ville to declare the red flag the national flag, made the noble reply that history will record as some extenuation of his political errors:

"Citizens, for my part, never will I adopt the red flag; and I will tell you, in a few words, why I will oppose it with all the strength of my patriotism.

"The reason is, citizens, that the tri-colored flag has gone round the world with our liberty and our glory, and the red flag has only gone round the Champs de Mars, dragged through floods of the people's blood."

Here we have the extremes meeting—the arbiters of the destinies of France were not so preoccupied with the perils of the state but what they could attend to the most petty details of the administration. The theatrical bulletin of the paper already quoted had the following:

"All the theatres are reopened. Our reporter visited them all in succession yesterday. *The boxes were all empty*, but all the other seats were filled. The 'Marseillaise' was sung every where."

Notwithstanding these tokens of the apparent general satisfaction, the very next day (March 1st) "A Workman" thus emitted *his* views on the new organization to be given to the theatres:

"The *ci-devant* royal theatres are, on account of the high prices of admission, quite closed to the people. This state of things must not be allowed to continue. These theatres, being supported by an enormous subsidy, should, on the contrary, be the most accessible to the people. These theatres are positively inaccessible to the people. Why should they be deprived of the pleasure a fine performance affords? The people are not exacting; let them be allowed seats that can be obtained without lessening their small savings. Give to the people all the enjoyments of the more favored by fortune."

Criticism in black coats united with criticism in blouses; one of its organs spoke as follows:

"The political events that have lately taken place have naturally had an effect on the Théâtre Français, always so ready for revolutions. It has thought, with good reason, that the republican government could not oppose its constituting itself into a republic. The commissary of the royal government was expelled like a Tarquin, and Citizen Lockroy was proclaimed dictator of the republic of letters in the Théâtre de la République. The Théâtre Français has a great and noble mission to fulfill. It must rise to the height of the present situation. It is no longer to offer vain and frivolous amusements to a nation that requires to hear, on a free stage, noble and elevated language. This was the aim of those generous citizens who, less fortunate than we shall be, endeavored to establish the first French republic on the basis of Order and Liberty. From the foot of the scaffold, Payen, appealing to authors, enthusiastically exclaims, 'Ye who love arts, who in the retirement of your closets meditate on what may be useful to mankind, ye patriotic writers, develop your plans, weigh with us the power of theatricals. The question is, How to combine their social influence with the principles of government? A public school must be instituted where taste and virtue shall be alike respected. The committee shall be bound to inquire of genius, to draw out talent, to gather the fruits of their vigils, to point out to their labors the patriotic aim they are to attain. The committee will be accountable to letters, to the nation, to themselves, for the poet whose lyre they neglect, for the historian to whom they furnish no tablet, for the genius whose flight has not been encouraged and directed.'"

After this quotation from Payen the *feuilletonist* continues: "We repeat it, it is to preserve the magnificent language of the masters, both ancient and modern, of our stage, to elevate thought, to teach the heart by means of sublime tableaux, to perfect art in every way, that the efforts of the stage in the new republic should be directed. In lieu of weak and tame literary and satirical sketches, we need vigorous and energetic sentiments; every thing that enlarges the soul, every thing that tends to inspire enthusiasm for that which is beautiful and good."

Such was the language of the two epochs at an interval of half a century; such are the ever-disappointed aspirations, the ever-vanishing illusions of all revolutions. The result of Payen's exhortations in 1792 are well known—extravagant tragedies and monstrous dramas.

We will now examine how far and how worthily dramatic literature answered the appeal of 1848.

The playbills had, during twenty-three days of the month of February, been filled with the announcement of an insignificant comedy of M. Scribe's, called "Le Puff."

The day after this regenerating revolution, this same "Puff" and "Le Chateau de Cartes" are again on the playbills. A little later the literature of the new era makes its appearance, and we have "Le Dernier des Kermor," certainly one of the last pieces that ought to have been performed under any *régime* whatsoever. Next in order came "Le Roi Attend!" an interlude so void of meaning and of talent that we can not but be surprised it was ever permitted to see the light. It was plain that such productions would not fulfill the flowery programme that had offered to "elevate thought, to move the heart by sublime tableaux." It was found necessary to have recourse again to old Corneille, and Mademoiselle Rachel came out in "Les Horaces." She acted *Camille* with an energy, a passion such as perhaps she had never before displayed.

It would have been well had she contented herself with repeating the noble Alexandrines of the great poet; no one thought of requiring more of her. But she too had been bitten by the revolutionary demon. The first occasion on which she exhibited symptoms of the disease we relate on the authority of a rather indiscreet modern muse, who gives it in a volume she has recently published, containing forty-five letters addressed to her by an immortal bard. We can well imagine that such a correspondence is one to be proud of, yet more delicacy and good taste would have advised less haste, and censured the bringing it before the public almost simultaneously with the invitations to the funeral of the illustrious writer.

At the time of the Revolution of the 24th of Feburary

Mademoiselle Rachel resided near the Porte Maillot. To enter Paris, she was obliged to make her way through armed groups, who endeavored to keep their zeal at boiling pitch by singing the epidemical "Marseillaise." The contagion communicated itself to Mademoiselle Rachel, who was going into Paris with Mademoiselle Louise Collet. She commenced singing in the carriage, giving the hymn with the same intonation with which she afterward brought it out on the stage. "One felt in the air," said Mademoiselle Louise Collet, when she related the incident to Béranger, "like a mighty breath of hope that bore along with it all youthful hearts."

"I greatly fear," replied Béranger, who was no longer young, and who had as much good sense as genius, "I greatly fear we have been made to tumble down the stairs we should have walked down."

Notwithstanding the threatening aspect of the horizon, the *rentrée* of Mademoiselle Rachel was not without *eclat;* she had learned a new *rôle*, and made her *début* as a political *tragédienne*. Having laid aside the peplum of *Camille*, she appeared between the acts attired in a long and very full white muslin dress. She wore no ornament in her dark hair; in her right hand she held the tri-colored flag. Never had her features, well suited and accustomed as they were to a tragic look, worn so terrible an expression as they did at that moment. As she came on toward the foot-lights with a slow, majestic tread, an undefined sensation of fear thrilled the audience, even before she had uttered a word. The countenance was of a livid hue; the eyebrows, swerving from their finely-drawn lines, wreathed like small serpents over the dark eye, glowing in its blood-red orbit with a strange, wild fire, telling a bitter tale of past wrong and of present revolt, of long-cherished, unquenchable hatred, of fierce, pitiless revenge; the lips were pregnant with unuttered maledictions; the nostrils, passionately dilated, seemed, like those of the war-horse, to scent from afar the carnage of the battle-field. The whole figure, in its terrific grace, its sinister beauty, was a magnificent representation of the implacable Nemesis of antiquity, and struck every heart with terror and admiration.

Raising her arm with a motion which, throwing back the

wide sleeve, left it bare to the shoulder, she commenced the hymn

"Allons enfants de la patrie."

She did not sing, she did not declaim, she uttered it somewhat after the fashion of the ancient melopœia, something between a chant and a recitation, to which her tones, at times sharp and harsh, at others hard and metallic, and then again deep and cavernous, like distant thunder, gave extraordinary effect. Her attitudes, her gestures, the motions of her head, all expressed admirably the sense of each stanza. The brow, at one moment bowed with shame and grief at the recollection of the woes and miseries she spoke, at another proudly raised as though it had just thrown off the yoke of the oppressor, the foot spurning the enslaved earth, the nerves quivering beneath the intensity of fixed resolution, all betrayed a deadly thirst for vengeance. As a *finale* to this splendid piece of mummery, the inimitable artist, apparently overcome by her patriotic feelings, sank on her knees, clasping to her heart the banner, the folds of which fell around her *statuesque* figure in the most picturesque manner; then rising abruptly, she waved the flag with the cry of "Aux armes, citoyens! &c.," to which the spectators, nearly crazed with excitement, responded with the most prolonged and deafening applause.

A *feuilletonist* remarked very justly that the *gratis* audience with which the provisional government had filled the house preferred one stanza of Rouget de L'Isle to all Corneille and Racine, with M. Ponsard thrown in as a makeweight.

This *heartfelt, impromptu* enthusiasm was as carefully studied and rehearsed as any of Mademoiselle Rachel's other characters. A poetess of no little celebrity, who had the curiosity to go and see the *tragédienne* behind the scenes, found her standing, banner in hand, awaiting the signal to go on the stage. Madame Waldor described her as looking *coldly excited.* The words express exactly the preparatory *working up* she was going through.

As far as regarded mere art—the art of the statuary—the performance was perfection; in a moral sense, nothing could be in worse taste than this appeal to the angry passions of an ignorant and excitable multitude. It was not Mademoiselle

Rachel's fault if her public was less ferocious than that of 1792. She did her part toward rousing it. But, whatever their errors, the revolutionists of 1848, notwithstanding silly as well as criminal incitations, were guiltless of shedding one drop of blood.

How the most magnificent productions of the human mind may be perverted to idle uses, defiled and degraded by being brought forward out of place and out of season, has been repeatedly proved by the senseless manner in which that grand hymn, the "Marseillaise," has been prostituted and made the herald of murder, arson, and pillage, the purveyor of the headsman, the incentive to every crime the mind of man can conceive, the arm of man can perpetrate. It is difficult to understand by what connection of ideas people are induced to bellow forth a frantic call for the "Marseillaise" in a place of public amusement. Those who were assembled in the house when this sad farce was acted had met after the day's toil of mind or body to rest from the cares of life for a few hours; they sought calm and repose; evil thoughts slumbered, and the noble lessons of magnanimity, honor, and valor of a Corneille could not fail to awaken corresponding feelings in the hearers. What urgent motive could tempt any reasoning creature to interrupt those quiet rational pleasures, to evoke reminiscences of bloody scaffolds and exterminating civil wars? This fatal poem recalled, it is true, some of the victories of France, but it had been also the *de profundis* of thousands of the noblest and wisest of her children.

Jules Janin, who had the good sense and the courage to raise his voice against this unhallowed scene, wrote an eloquent article on its mischievous tendencies. "What, indeed, has the dread cry of 'To arms!' to do with peaceable citizens? Where was the danger? What frontier was attacked? What enemy was to be expelled? Whose impure blood was to be shed? Wherefore this sudden cry of mad dog? Alas! the idiots whose breath raises this devastating storm, who howl forth this war-cry of Cain, have not the slightest idea of its import. They know not that they wield at random a double-bladed weapon—one steel, the salutary instrument that cures an evil, the other the poisoned tool that creates a worse one.

Not for these poor fools and dupes, or for the monsters who degraded it to their own purposes, was this fanaticizing hymn written; not for these, but for men who sang it bare-headed, with faith-inspired voices, on their march to their threatened frontiers. *Certes*, the thing was worth some reflection, seeing that it had overturned altars, overthrown dynasties, depopulated whole provinces. Serious men, whose hearts retain some fear of God, some love for humanity, will meditate long before they shout this exterminating cry; and, above all, they will choose some more fitting place for its anathematizing burden than the temple of pleasure. They will remember that to this very tune, valiant men, helpless mothers and daughters, innocent babes, were marched to the guillotine, butchered like sheep in the shambles, hurried into eternity by fire, water, and the sword. Among that very audience that gazed admiringly on her who gave such life to its spirit of discord, few reflected that almost every family there had had one or more of its members offered up as a victim to satiate the sanguinary feelings its revolutionary chorus awakened.

"All hail, all homage, all respect, all love to the 'Marseillaise' marching to the battle-field, shoeless, ill clothed, ill fed, ill armed, unpaid, leveling the snow-clad Alps, treading deeper into earth the dust of the Cæsars, crossing the astonished and conquered Rhine, and winning the well-contested fields of Austerlitz and Marengo!

"But to the 'Marseillaise' of the club, the pot-house, the *carrefours*, and the barricades: to the 'Marseillaise' that instigates the midnight assassin and the cowardly worker of infernal machines; to the 'Marseillaise' of the revolutionary tribunal, that drags to the guillotine, that lays waste vast districts, that depopulates towns whose walls crumble at its sounds as at that of the trumpet of the destroying angel, to this hell-born beldame, the anathema of nations! Let us hope her notes may be effaced from the memory of men, and especially of Frenchmen."

That these considerations should have had any weight on the cosmopolitan Jewess, whose country was that which paid her best, whose feelings of humanity or of gratitude weighed as naught against the all-sovereign shekel, was not to be ex-

pected. And yet it is probable that she erred from ignorance. Accustomed to make every thing subservient to the love of money, she did not pause to think what evils might arise from the means she used. She forgot, perhaps, that she was raising this flag against her best friends. She forgot, too, that the time was not far gone by when Jules Janin recalled her to a sense of the respect due to that very "people" she was cringing to so obsequiously, and advised her, when in the part of *Bérénice* she spoke of the "people," especially as the words were there meant to designate the Roman nation, not to utter them with the scorn and contempt she did.

---

## CHAPTER XIX.

### 1848.

Decree of the Citizen Minister Ledru Rollin.—"Lucrèce."—Nemesis wearing the Insignia of a Commissaire de Police.—Grand National Performance.—The Blouse triumphant.—"Les Horaces."—"Le Malade Imaginaire."—"La Marseillaise."—Bouquet Monstre.—A Sovereign more despotic than the last.—Second Grand National Performance.—Honorable Testimonial to Mademoiselle Rachel.—Enthusiasm at a low Ebb.—Grand Fêtes and no Bread.—Theatricals under Louis Philippe and under the Provisional Government.—Death of Vernet.—Mademoiselle Rachel in two Characters of the same Play.

In the mean while, the claim put forth by "A Workman" for a few cheap seats for the people in the *ci-devant* royal theatres had set the wits of Citoyen Ledru Rollin to work, and the result was the following decree published by that too famous minister:

"The Minister of the Interior.—Inasmuch as the state is bound to furnish such labor to the people as shall enable them to earn a living, it is also bound to encourage all efforts tending to make them participators of the moral enjoyments that elevate the soul. Inasmuch as the performance of the master-pieces of the French stage can not but develop worthy and noble feelings, on the offer made by Citizen Lockroy, commissary of the government at the Théâtre de la République, on the report of the Director of the Fine Arts,

DECREES:

"The commissary of the government at the Théâtre de la République is authorized to give national performances at short intervals.

"Said performances to consist of works of the best French dramatic authors, acted by the *élite* of the actors of that theatre. Between the acts national airs will be played.

"All the seats in the house will be numbered, and each seat have a corresponding ticket.

"Said tickets will be distributed to the twelve municipalities of Paris, to the Hotel de Ville, and to the Prefecture of Police, and thence to the clubs, schools, factories, and poorer citizens, who will obtain them by drawing for them.

"Signed, LEDRU ROLLIN.

"Paris, March 24, 1848."

Pride, the sin of the fallen angel, betrays itself, strange to say, more openly in France during periods of revolution than at any other time. Each profession, each trade, each calling, believes itself specially appointed to take an active part, and is convinced of its superior importance in the guidance of the destinies of the nation.

"Our mission is taking a wider range," exclaimed M. Hippolyte Lucas, the critic of "La Siècle;" "it rises to the height of a public function. Henceforward there will weigh upon us a responsibility to be exercised, not, as that of the censorship, in secret, but in public, before the eyes of all. Criticism has become a witty and skeptical amusement. For this it can not be blamed, all its efforts to be aught else having proved useless. The moment has arrived when every thing defective in the organization and tendency of the stage must be attacked without mercy. We shall not be found wanting in this honorable duty. We shall not devote ourselves merely to the preservation of the sacred rules of language and of taste; we are also bound to hasten every possible reform on which depends the future of literature and public education through the teachings of the drama."

It was rather strange that this sapient critic had not thought of putting all these excellent theories in practice under a gov-

ernment that had, perhaps too imprudently, left to the press the most unbounded liberty. It would seem that a revolution was necessary to make him understand his mission.

This was the second time that dramatic literature had been put to a revolutionary test. Criticism and the drama have remained what they were previous to these cataclysms. The world is upset to prove the emptiness and incapacity of all these brainless innovators, the vanity of their illusions, the chimerical nature of their pretensions.

Not one new work of note was brought out on the French stage during this new *régime*. "L'Avanturière," by Emilie Augier, had been written and received previous to the month of February, and had, besides, no revolutionary idea attached to it. The only thing accomplished was the transplantation of M. Ponsard's "Lucrèce" from the Odèon to the Rue de Richelieu. M. Ponsard's tragedy had been originally intended for the Théâtre Français, but in consequence of the refusal of messieurs the players in ordinary to his majesty, had been brought out at the Odèon. This refusal had been stigmatized as an act of heinous injustice: it was simply an error of taste.

"Lucrèce" was acted at the Théâtre Français, *alias* de la République, on the 24th of March, and Mademoiselle Rachel obtained, as the heroine, great applause. Her calm, quiet dignity was peculiarly well suited to the character of the fair young Roman matron. The vehemence, the passion with which it was acted by Madame Dorval, who had created the *rôle* at the Odèon, had disappeared; but, if Mademoiselle Rachel's acting was colder, it was more correct, more classically tragic than that of the famous melo-dramatic actress.

The applause Mademoiselle Rachel elicited in "Lucrèce" was perhaps no less due to the allusions the play contained than to her talent. She produced, however, a great sensation in the seemingly insignificant line of the dream,

"J'essayais de bouger et je ne pouvais pas."

The other passages of the play that could be interpreted as allusive to actual circumstances were received with tremendous applause. The lines

"C'est peu de songer à detruire,
Si l'on ne songe encor comme on veut reconstruire,"

were twice called for, and greeted with four rounds. The lines

> "Valère si mon vœu doit prevaloir ni moi.
> Ni personne jamais ne se nommera roi,"

met with the same tokens of approbation.

The theme of this tragedy is based on Livy's narrative. Those who like political discussions dramatized have their taste fully gratified in the second act. There is very little dialogue; the speeches are too long to admit of more. All the *dramatis personæ* have a great deal to say, and take up a long while each whenever they get a chance. *Brutus*, especially, is a great talker. The play should end where *Brutus*, *Bollatinus*, and *Lucretius* kneel and invoke thrice the name of *Lucrèce*.

The real tragedy of the evening was "La Marseillaise," into which Mademoiselle Rachel, no longer content with the tri-colored flag, had introduced a new element. Nemesis had bound round her waist the tri-colored sash of a Commissary of Police in the exercise of his functions. Her patriotism was constantly on the alert for new ways of displaying itself.

"A portion of the members of the provisional government witnessed this performance," remarks M. Hippolyte Lucas; "we have already noticed several times, with pleasure, the presence in this theatre of the citizens who have assumed the responsibility of the state's great interests. This augurs well for the destinies of the stage, which are linked, more than is generally supposed, with those of the state. Three national performances are announced. Let now such authors as can make the heart of the nation vibrate come forward, and we shall indeed have magnificent performances. Paris will be quite the Athens of modern civilization. It is said that the great name of George Sand will consecrate the first of these performances."

We shall now see what became of this fine programme, and how far it realized its pompous announcements.

The popular and gratuitous performances claimed by "A Workman" and decreed by Citizen Ledru Rollin took place. The first, given under the name of "Première Représentation Nationale," was described by the same M. Hippolyte Lucas who had been one of its promoters:

"With the exception of a part of the orchestra reserved for the members of the provisional government and for the press, all the seats were occupied by—I will not say the people, for we are all of the people—but by that happy crowd whose means do not usually permit of their enjoying so choice a treat. The triumphant blouse leaned on the front of the *balcon;* the caps of Rigolette and of Jenny L'Ouvrière reigned in the once-privileged boxes; and the Gamin de Paris, who had neglected, and with good reason, going to the printing-office with M. Paul de Kock's proof-sheets, in order to hear George Sand's prologue of 'Le Roi Attend!' handed his cap through the ranks of the spectators for the reception of popular donations to be invested in the purchase of a monster bouquet to be presented to Mademoiselle Rachel after the 'Marseillaise.'

"The spectators behaved as the Parisian people usually do at free performances. They were remarkably quiet, and proved themselves possessed of admirable instinct to understand all the allusions, of rare aptitude of heart and intellect to note and appreciate all the poet's beauties."

"Le Roi Attend!" was a species of imitation of Molière's "Impromptu de Versailles." Molière had been busily engaged in the preparation of one of the improvised pieces sometimes asked for by Louis XIV. Worn out with fatigue, vexed by the ingratitude of the actors, who pretended they could not play a thing they had never learned, annoyed by the messengers who were constantly sent to hurry him, the great poet dropped asleep on the unfinished page. During his sleep the background of the stage filled with clouds, which, parting, disclosed, surrounded by a halo, and grouped around the Muse, represented by Mademoiselle Rachel, Æschylus, Sophocles, Euripides, symbolizing the poetry of the ancients; Shakspeare, Voltaire, and Beaumarchais, representatives of the modern world. These personages, both retrospective and prospective, for they represented to Molière the past and the future, sustained and encouraged him. They related to the sleeping poet the influence they have had on the human mind; that which he himself, Voltaire, and Beaumarchais would have. They told him dramatic poets prepared the freedom of nations; they sowed the seeds of revolutions reaped by the peo-

ple. After these philosophical lessons the clouds closed, the vision disappeared, and the sleeping poet was awakened by his faithful servant, who told him the king was waiting. Molière exclaimed, "What! are there yet kings?"

The whole prologue was written to bring in this sentence, which contained all the wit of the piece.

This time, however, the king who waited wore no regal mantle or flowing wig; it was the more powerful people of 1848 whose sovereignty was acknowledged and whose protection is implored for the Théâtre de la République by the obsequious poet.

This poor piece of flattery, which did little credit to the name of the author, scarcely survived the evening. It was followed by "Les Horaces;" a new song, "La Jeune République," composed by Madame Pauline Viardot, and sung by Roger of the Opera; "Le Malade Imaginaire," by Molière; and "La Marseillaise," chanted by Mademoiselle Rachel, the burden being taken up and repeated by fifty of the pupils of the Conservatoire, dressed in white muslin, and wearing the indispensable tri-colored sash. An accompaniment of tocsin, drums, cannon, and waving of banners came in with the last stanza, and quite delighted the audience, who *encored* the noisy patriotism most enthusiastically.

The evening was concluded with the presentation of the Brobdignagian bouquet. This national offering was made in the name of the people to Mademoiselle Rachel by the aforesaid Gamin de Paris, who climbed over the foot-lights for the purpose. Loud applause greeted this ovation, and a second collection was made for the poor, in order to show that the tax to which the latter are entitled on ordinary nights was not forgotten on free ones.

No cost, no flattery, no trouble was spared to please the people. The greatest artists were brought together, and invention was tasked to diversify the amusements offered to them. How far all these efforts were attended with success was shown no later than on the second of the free nights. In order to avoid offending the pride of the many-headed sovereign, far more arbitrary and exacting than the one lately deposed, the performances were not called free, but national.

The second of these *représentations nationales* took place on the 21st of April. The result contrasted greatly with that of the first one. Time was speeding on, and bringing with it the consequences of the follies committed. The people began to reflect: their leaders gave them *circences*, but without the *panem* they had little inclination to enjoy them. Enthusiasm had until then been the order of the day, but enthusiasm is incompatible with hunger, and it was now at a low ebb. We will leave the partisans of *le peuple* to narrate the festive scene. Symptoms of dissatisfaction are evident in the preamble of this apologist of the new state of things, for he begins by animadverting on the new name given to the house.

"We have witnessed the second free performance at the Théâtre de la Republique. And wherefore Théâtre de la Republique? Was this flattery to the new form of government that rules us very necessary? It seems to us there was nothing monarchical in the fair name of Théâtre Français. Known throughout the world, illustrated by so many real geniuses, by so many celebrated interpreters, it was almost ingratitude on the part of the players to despoil it of this great title. Well, what is done can not be helped, and so now for the Théâtre de la République.

"The night before last was one of free performance. Mr. Lockroy, the new manager, and the Minister of the Interior have combined to invite the people every fortnight to occupy the best seats, and see the works of the masters of the drama acted by the former players in ordinary to the king. We had expected to find the house filled from top to bottom, the boxes adorned with happy faces full of astonishment at finding themselves there; we thought to have been elbowed in the lobby by the *blouse* and the *bourgerou*, to have heard loud, hearty peals of laughter, or frank, noisy, unstinted applause at the pathetic parts of the performance. We found nothing of all this. In the first place, the house was almost empty; the first two rows of orchestra seats were filled with the *Enfants de Paris;* on all the others were members of the provisional government, the chief functionaries, a number of the officers of the *Garde Urbaine*, and five or six members of the press; the boxes were partly occupied by inferior functionaries; scatter-

ed here and there were a few workmen; in a word, the house had all the appearance of that of the Porte St. Martin on ordinary occasions. The chill aspect communicated itself to the boards; the performance of 'Phèdre' was weak, heavy, and monotonous. The voices of the *Enfants de Paris* and the 'Marseillaise' had all the honors of the evening."

With reference to the latter portion of the entertainment the critic continued:

"We lack words to express what we feel. It is not a woman, it is not an artiste that we see, it is a goddess of antiquity, solemn, grave, austere, illuminated by flaming rays, who, from the depths of her cave, comes forth to fill our souls with anger, hatred, and revenge. When Mademoiselle Rachel utters the revolutionary hymn, we turn hot and cold by turns, the blood rushes to the heart, the arteries throb, the eye quails before the fixed look of the pythoness, and we have not even the power of motion to express all the admiration this imposing and sublime sight inspires."

The symptoms of discouragement were too evident to be denied. Notwithstanding all these puffs to fill the house, it had remained empty; notwithstanding all the revolutionary convulsions of Mademoiselle Rachel, the few spectators had remained frigid. Yet the *tragédienne* made superhuman efforts to fill the treasury and avert the ruin that was impending. Her civism had its source in the anxious wish to sustain the house whose ruin was sure to impoverish her own coffers, and this motive was sufficient to call out all her energy; she played without cessation and with indefatigable zeal all the plays of her *repertoire* in succession. While half the theatres were compelled to close and the others were on the verge of ruin, her exertions were mainly instrumental in supporting the house of the Rue de Richelieu for some little time, and were acknowledged by the *sociétaires* in the following letter:

"Dear Camarade,—You have double reason to feel proud and happy. Never has your success been so brilliant, never has it been so useful to the interests of our company. You have struggled for us with indefatigable devotion against the difficult circumstances which for the past two months have

afflicted all artists. You have maintained the Théâtre de la République in a more prosperous state than any other has attained.

"We are proud to see in this, dear *camarade*, not so much the accomplishment of a duty as a proof of real sisterly friendship. Accept in return the unanimous thanks of your friends and brothers. They hope this letter, signed by them all, will remain to you one of the most precious monuments of your dramatic career; for if it is noble and praiseworthy to obtain triumphs as brilliant as yours, it is no less flattering to have deserved the affection and gratitude of all one's comrades.

"The artists' sociétaires of Théâtre de la République."

Here followed all the signatures.

Alas! this amity and concord was to be of short duration: the *chère camarade* was soon to do battle as steadily against these dearly-beloved brothers and sisters as ever she had for them; to renounce the demigods of her youth, to turn her back on the temple, to abjure even the "Marseillaise."

But we will not anticipate those sad times; the present were quite bad enough. Even Mademoiselle Rachel and the "Marseillaise" were unable to make head long against the adverse wind then blowing. If the house was empty on free nights with extra performances, what could be expected on ordinary occasions when admittance was to be paid. The Grand Opera itself was even less attended than the theatres. Forsaken by the managers, Mirecourt and A. Adam, when it took the name of Théâtre de la Nation, it had formed itself into a company in imitation of the Théâtre Français; but, notwithstanding this compliment to the *nation*, the latter—at least that portion of it that inhabited Paris—had its time too much taken up every night by the seventy-four political clubs it attended to have any to spare for theatricals. The Opera had less chance than the drama, lyrical master-pieces offering no food to the political passions of the crowd.

On the 15th of May, Monsieur Charles de Matharel, the editor of "Le Siècle," who saw things with less enthusiastic eyes than M. Hippolyte Lucas, expressed himself as follows:

"We have said, and all our *confrères* with us, that it was

necessary something should be done for the theatres; that they were in such a state of crisis that, should government not come promptly to the rescue, they would inevitably be compelled to close. Our forebodings have, alas! been realized; several houses have already been closed, others are preparing to do likewise, and, with the exception of one or two that are maintained by a subsidy, Paris will not have a single theatre!"

To this point, in the space of two months and a half, had the Republic of the 24th of February brought dramatic art. The provisional government had other work on its hands than to attend to the requirements of the stage. It had now no time to share the amusements of the triumphant blouse, to sit between the caps of Rigolette and Jenny L'Ouvrière. Nor did the governed fail to taunt their chosen government with the disheartening prospect.

"The existence of a hundred thousand persons is of so little importance! Artists, men busy with literary and dramatic works, are of so little consequence, it matters little what becomes of them! Truly, those who govern have something else to do than to trouble themselves about such people! Besides, artists have no pickaxes, spades, and shovels; they do not go down into the street in warlike array, with flags and drums; they do not talk loudly; they make no threats, neither do they obtain any thing, and presently they and their families, and all the little trades and callings, artistic, literary, and dramatic, that are more or less dependent on the theatres for means to earn their bread, must starve.

"The result of all this is that the Republic gets few benisons among artists."

After all these lamentations and recriminations, it became necessary to beg assistance. Five hundred francs per evening was asked for each theatre. It was proposed that, in requital, tickets to that amount should be sent to the *mairies*, to be distributed gratuitously. To this was to be added a free performance once a week. It was not borne in mind that on the 21st of the preceding month, the innovator, Lockroy, aided by the Minister of the Interior, had failed to attract an audience, though the entertainment consisted of Mademoiselle

Rachel in "Phèdre" and "La Marseillaise," with the provisional government to boot.

A month later, on the 18th of June, matters were still in a deplorable state, and this was made more apparent by the publication of the receipts of this year, compared with those of the preceding one, when the people lived under a monarchy, the destruction of which was to bring about such happy changes.

The following table shows the receipts of the first three months of each year in seven theatres:

| | 1847. | 1848. |
|---|---|---|
| Variétés | 228,455.25 | 133,966.50 |
| Gymnase | 218,562.50 | 103,191.70 |
| Montansier | 222,218.20 | 118,195.65 |
| Porte St. Martin | 199,146.25 | 122,334.65 |
| Folies Dramatiques | 107,294.40 | 696,918.70 |
| Dèlassements Comiques | 37,688.70 | 22,334.85 |
| Funambules | 25,735 | 7,751.90 |
| Francs | 1,039,100.30 | 604,693.95 |

The above shows a falling off of nearly fifty per cent. in 1848.

It is worthy of notice that government securities depreciated in nearly the same ratio, as may be seen by the following quotations:

On the 19th of February, 1848, the 5 per cents. were at $116\frac{70}{100}$ francs, and on the 15th of June at 68 francs.

On the 19th of February, 1848, the 3 per cents. were at $74\frac{20}{100}$ francs, and on the 15th of June at 46 francs.

The stage lost at this time one of whom it had reason to be proud, the comic actor Vernet. The memory of this excellent actor and worthy man, whose reputation and talent were far above the vulgar and obscure theatre that he illustrated by his numerous and varied creations, was not honored by a single tribute of homage or of kind remembrance. Not one of the authors who were indebted to him for fame or wealth found a word to say over the grave of the proud and witty *Père de la débutante*, of the lover of *Madame d'Egmont*, of the grotesque representative of *Madame Gibon*, of *Mathias l'Invalide*, and of so many other original and charming types.

It is true that Vernet did not pertain to that class of artists

who make use of their talents to evoke popular passions, to provoke the effusion of blood, to excite fratricidal hates, to brave absent foes. At an epoch very anterior, and during the effervescence of a former revolution, Vernet was called upon to give the sanguinary hymn of "Rouget de l'Isle." He answered the request neither by singing, chanting, or reciting it. He gave proof on this occasion of the ready wit and good sense that characterized his honest and peace-loving soul. It was in the year 1830, a *vaudeville*, entitled "Le Mendiant," was acting at the Varietés, and Vernet had the part of the beggar fiddler. At that passage where he asks his friend what he shall play to him, a voice from the pit cried "La Marseillaise!" to which a large proportion of the audience thundered "No!" To avert the impending disturbance, Vernet immediately commenced playing the well-known old air of "J'ai du bon tabac."

In the month of May Mademoiselle Rachel tried another scheme to attract the public. She had remarked that in M. Ponsard's tragedy the two chief female characters, *Lucrèce* and *Tullie*, never come on the stage in the same scene. This suggested the idea of playing both parts the same evening. The experiment was tried on the boards of the Italian Opera House on the occasion of a benefit obtained by her sister Sarah, and proved a complete failure. Notwithstanding the difference of costume, the result was a confusion in the minds of the spectators that quite marred the effect. Mademoiselle Rachel's features did not possess the mobility of expression indispensable for such a task. Half the time the audience were at a loss to know whether it was *Lucrèce* or *Tullie* that was speaking.

It was not the first time that, in order to draw full houses, the dignity of tragedy had been lowered by the use of these clap-trap disguises. But the experiment rarely meets with any success. Comedies, written expressly for the purpose, such as "Frosine, ou la Dernière Venue," "Les Jumeaux Venitiens," and others, have been tolerated, but tragedy will not bear these Carnival tricks.

After this season of unusually active service, Mademoiselle Rachel took her customary leave of absence.

## CHAPTER XX.

1848.

Three Months in the South of France.—Rachel a licensed Propagandist.—Visit to Madame Lafarge.—A public Confession.—A hard-hearted Father.—Return to Paris.—Sketch of the Organization of the Théâtre Français.—The Priestess turns her back on the Temple.—A Visit of the Faculty.—An uncourteous Public.

RACHEL spent three months this year in the south of France, pursuing fortune indefatigably and playing without cessation almost. She performed eighty times in ninety days during the summer months, and in more than twenty different localities.

A singular circumstance, and one little known, connected with this tour, is that, before leaving Paris, the *tragédienne* actually offered her services to the provisional government to popularize the Republic in the Departments by singing the "Marseillaise" wherever she played! The offer was accepted by Ledru Rollin, the Minister of the Interior, who caused the following circular to be addressed to all theatrical managers in the provinces, recommending Mademoiselle Rachel to their kind offices, and enjoining them to render her all aid in the exercise of her ministry as a Propagandist:

"Cabinet of the Minister de l'Interieur, Paris, April 24, 1848.

"CITIZEN MANAGER,—Citizen Felix having assembled a company with which he intends visiting various parts of France, it is his intention to have the master-pieces of our stage performed, the *Citoyenne* Rachel volunteering to be their interpreter. The *Citoyenne* Rachel has broken engagements to a large amount which she had abroad, in order to remain in France!

"The devotion she has shown to the Republic in Paris by her admirable creation of the 'Marseillaise' she intends displaying in the Departments.

"The electricity (!) she has diffused here will doubtless pro-

duce also the most marvelous and salutary effects in our provinces. It is in the name of art, over which the Republic intends extending its powerful and fertilizing protection, that I request you will take into consideration the sacrifices she makes, and lend your assistance to facilitate the performances which Citizen Raphael Felix intends organizing in your town.

"*Salut et Fraternité.*

"ELIAS REGNAULT,

"Director, *ad interim*, of Theatres and Libraries."

M. Léon Legault, allured by the bright prospects held out in this circular, entered into an agreement with the Felixes, father, son, and daughter, by which it was stipulated they should receive, free of all expense, 4400 francs from the general management of the Lyons theatres. This agreement was rescinded, and a second one made, by which the expenses occasioned by each performance were to be at the charge of the Felixes, they receiving the whole amount of the receipts made, with the sole condition of paying 1000 francs per night to Mr. Legault.

The non-execution of this agreement entailed a forfeit of 5000 francs unless its fulfillment was rendered impossible by war or some other public calamity.

The *tragédienne*, either deeming she could gain more elsewhere, or actuated by some other motive, altered her mind and her course, carrying the "Marseillaise" to Toulouse, Montpellier, Nimes, Arles, Aix, Marseilles, &c., &c. This propagandist expedition was sufficiently remunerative to enable her to pay, without impoverishing herself, the 5000 francs forfeit to which the tribunal condemned her at the suit of M. Legault for having neglected to popularize the Republic in Lyons according to the terms of her contract.

It was during this year's visit to Montpellier that Rachel obtained permission of the authorities, and of the captive herself, to visit Madame Lafarge, then imprisoned in the Maison Centrale of that town.

The unfortunate woman made a deep impression on her visitor. She could not but feel great interest in one who, innocent or guilty, had acquired so terrible a celebrity, and was suffering so cruel a doom.

One thing particularly impressed Mademoiselle Rachel: she plainly saw on the prisoner's features the seal of the fatal disease of which she herself and her sister were to die. Describing this interview in a letter to a friend, she alluded very feelingly to the symptoms of consumption she had noticed in Madame Lafarge, saying,

"The poor woman—whether guilty or not, I must call her so—the poor woman was slowly dying of that most terrible of all diseases, consumption. She feels the skein of life's thread unwinding, and, to the very last, she will see, she will feel. It is very dreadful. Better far a bullet in the weak chest, or a tile falling on the aching head some windy day."

Did the writer then presage her own fate when she expressed such horror of another's?

Mademoiselle Rachel afterward told her friends that she had consulted several clairvoyants, and that to her inquiry whether Madame Lafarge was guilty, the answer had always been in the negative. This was probably more satisfactory to her than such evidence would have been to judge or jury.

Her tour was marked by other incidents of a less gloomy nature. In this same town, H——, the actor who played the part of *Theramènes*, was hissed in the famous narrative of the death of *Hippolyte*. He immediately advanced to the foot-lights, and, addressing the public with imperturbable *sang froid*, said, "*Ma foi*, gentlemen, you are quite right; I said it shockingly; but never mind, I'll begin it all over again."

*Phèdre*, who was waiting in the slips for the moment when she is to drink the poison (*que Médée apporta dans Athénes*), laughed heartily at this confession.

At Draguignan, Fleuret, who played the part of *Theseus*, worn out with his constant night-work and day-traveling, fell fast asleep while listening to the above-mentioned narrative of his son's horrible death. A very vigorous reminder bestowed upon his shins was required to rouse him in time to exclaim,

"O mon fils, chèr espoir que je me suis ravi."

But while Rachel was away reaping the rich summer harvests, the green-room intrigues and spirit of revolt, which the necessity of union had momentarily quelled, began to ferment

anew, and on her return in September she found her own empire undermined, and her favorite, the dictator, whom she had been so instrumental in creating, on the eve of being expelled. The dismissal of Citizen Lockroy was imminent.

It is difficult for those unacquainted with French customs to have any idea of the importance attached by the public to all that concerns the stage, of the absorbing interest taken by the Parisians in the quarrels of actors, in the vicissitudes of their theatres, in the green-room intrigues. The high honor in which dramatic literature is held contributes greatly toward exciting this interest. Actors in France are not left to their own resources, as is the case in other countries. The French government grants considerable subsidies to the larger theatres, in order to enable them to add *eclat* to their performances, to afford to their artists the leisure necessary to perfect their studies, to remunerate the talent employed. The influence of government is not so materially felt by the minor theatres, though its protection and encouragement is also extended to them. Among the houses to which the subsidy is granted, the chief are the Grand Opera and the Théâtre Français. The Grand Opera, one of the greatest attractions the capital offers to foreigners, is, in part, a dependence of the crown, and, since its creation by Louis XIV., all the succeeding sovereigns have felt a pride in sustaining it with *éclat*. As to the Théâtre Français, or La Comédie Français, as it is indifferently called, its actors are looked upon as the chosen and enlightened interpreters of that dramatic literature which is one of the glories of France. The actors reap the benefit of the worship tributed to the genius of Corneille, Racine, Molière, Régnard, Voltaire, and so many other master-minds. Hence the lively interest with which the public regards every thing that concerns them. Their lawsuits are matters of public import; the most distinguished lawyers dispute the honor of figuring in them; and the public journals follow the cases as though the fate of the country was at stake.

That the reader may the better understand the nature and the object of the dissensions between Mademoiselle Rachel and the Théâtre Français, dissensions which the law was called upon to settle at the close of this year, a slight sketch

of the peculiar organization of that theatre is indispensable. Without this commentary, this portion of our work would prove to some persons unintelligible.

The actors of the Théâtre Français constitute, in fact, a commercial association. The talent of each member is the portion of capital he brings into it, and, according to the valuation put on this intellectual property, each is entitled to what is called a half, a quarter, an eighth, three quarters of a share, or a full share in the profits of the theatre, which are divided into twenty-four shares. When all the shares are taken, the *personnel* of the theatre is not yet sufficiently numerous for its requirements; to supply the deficiency, the holders of shares, that is, the *comédiens sociétaires*, engage what are called *pensionnaires*. The *pensionnaires* are actors with fixed salaries paid by *sociétaires*. These salaries diminish the profits of the company, and constitute one of its charges.

The company is governed by a committee of management, composed of six male members. The company has also the privilege of being the arbiter of literary merit, as it is to a *comité de lecture*, composed of male and female members, that all plays presented to the theatre are submitted, and this last committee has a right to refuse, to receive fully or conditionally, at its own discretion, any play.

This constitutional charter, which had existed for many years, was confirmed by a decree known as the "Decree of Moscow," from its having been signed by Napoleon I. in that city on the 15th of October, 1815. By virtue of this decree, the free action of the company is only subject to the *surveillance* of the superintendent of the court performance and to that of the imperial commissioner; its committees regulate the material, financial, and artistic affairs of the theatre with almost uncontrolled freedom. *Certes*, no organization can be more liberal; none could seem better calculated to stimulate the actors to do their utmost for the prosperity of their house, since whatsoever they do is for their own interests, and the value of their shares is increased according to the benefits realized; it places them, moreover, in a position of honorable independence, and should have the effect of maintaining peace and concord among them, as they are themselves the arbiters

of all the little discussions, the rivalries, bickerings, and quarrels arising from wounded vanity and irritated self-love, inseparable to the profession. Unfortunately, the facts have always been far from justifying this fair conclusion. At the time the Decree of Moscow was published, bitter dissensions, envenomed rivalries—among others, that which reigned between Mademoiselle Mars and Mademoiselle Levert, divided the company. The decree was the *quos ego!* of him who was accustomed to see all things return, at his command, within the limits of order.

After the fall of the Empire, the company went on, somewhat lamely, to be sure, under the rather lax *surveillance* of messieurs the gentlemen of the bed-chamber, who had been brought back by the Restoration, taking refuge, ever and anon, against any real or fancied infringement of its privileges under the shadow of the Decree of Moscow, as under the Palladium of its independence. But, like all other bodies, after 1830 it began to experience the effects of the dissolving spirit of the times. Matters came to such a pass that, in 1847, the wretched management, the intestine strife, the bad state of its financial affairs, made the interposition of government indispensable. By a decree published on the 29th of August, a chief was appointed to the disorganized republic. The director chosen was M. Buloz, a man of letters of some reputation, who had given proof of his capacity for management in the successful organization of the "Revue des deux Mondes," a monthly publication. The nomination of M. Buloz in the place of the committee of management was a complete revolution for the company; the new director was, by some of the members, received as a usurper, by others as a liberator.

The continual complaints of Mademoiselle Rachel, which always found favor with those in authority, her threats of resignation as far back as the year 1846, had largely contributed to bring about the measures that had finally caused the nomination of M. Buloz. From the beginning she had declared herself in favor of the dictatorship, and from that time she had been the soul of the party that had sustained it ever since its first creation.

Mademoiselle Rachel had a whole share in the company.

and forty-two thousand francs out of the subvention granted by the state. Consequently, it was for her interest that the theatre should be ably managed, and made to give large profits. It was no less for her interests that it should keep on good terms with every government. She knew well, too, that an actress of more than ordinary talent, a young and pretty woman, would have a far better chance of ruling a manager, however absolute he might be, than a committee of six men, all actuated by different views, claims, and passions.

These considerations led Mademoiselle Rachel to lend all her influence to the election of M. Lockroy, the republican commissary who succeeded M. Buloz, expelled in February. But revolutions are moving sands. When the revolutionary fever had cooled off, and while Mademoiselle Rachel was away on leave, the independent party raised its head in the committee. M. Lockroy was attacked; his provisional origin, his national performances, his "Marseillaise," were made as great reproaches of as the ministerial origin of M. Buloz had formerly been. M. Lockroy was in his turn assaulted by his very constituents, and when his firm ally, Mademoiselle Rachel, returned, his fall was decreed, and it actually took place in the beginning of October. His dismissal angered Mademoiselle Rachel exceedingly; it wounded her vanity and injured her interests. She resolved on the most energetic measures rather than fall again under the democratic yoke of her peers, whom she refused to look upon as her equals. She had recommenced her theatrical duties on her return from her summer tour, opening the season with "Phèdre" on the 5th of September. The "Marseillaise" was called for but not given. The episodes of June had taken place; a reaction, of which Jules Janin had shown himself one of the most energetic and courageous organs, had followed, and the change in public opinion was evident from the coldness with which the call was received by the majority of the audience. The stage-manager came forward and said Mademoiselle Rachel was troubled with a cold.

On the 12th of October Mademoiselle Rachel again attempted a part unsuited to her age and style. She played *Agrippine* in "Britannicus," and failed completely in it.

Mademoiselle Rachel had hoped, by her alacrity in resuming her duties, to maintain M. Lockroy in power; finding her wishes disregarded and her ally dismissed, she resorted to her former threats of resigning, and finally did so. The resignation was duly notified to her "dear comrades" in a letter dated the 14th of October. She had now completed the term of service—ten years—specified by the Decree of Moscow to enable a *sociétaire* to resign. The last phrase of her letter contains the reasons she gives for her determination.

"It is with regret," says this thorough actress, "it is with the deepest grief, my dear comrades, that I find myself under the necessity of retiring *forever* from the Théâtre Français, but my health, *perhaps my dignity*, are depending on that step."

The committee was, or appeared to be, surprised.

"What," exclaimed its members, on the receipt of this letter, "Mademoiselle Rachel ill! Why, she was never better in her life than she is this year, and never performed her duties so well. She has played once in March, thirteen times in April, thirteen times in May. If we count the number of times she has performed during her *congé*, we shall find she played twenty-seven times in one month! She may require rest after such fatiguing labors; we are aware that she is in the habit of getting her physicians to prescribe periods of convalescence every time she returns from her periodical excursions; but this does not constitute an illness; it would, on the contrary, go to prove a most energetic nature."

The committee thereupon endeavored to induce Mademoiselle Rachel to retract so ill-grounded a resolution. Her answer was not delayed, and in it something of the true motives that actuated her peeps out.

"I am no longer able, *when thus annoyed and vexed*, to fulfill the duties of the art to which I have devoted my life."

Here she no longer complains of health; wounded self-love is the grievance.

All measures of conciliation appearing useless, the management had recourse to the law, and a suit was commenced on the 20th of November, before the civil tribunal of the Seine. A letter, however, from Mademoiselle Rachel to the committee (no longer her "dear comrades") stopped the proceedings for a time. It was couched in the following terms:

"MESSIEURS,—The state of my health is such that the suit you have commenced on the 20th of this month has in reality no object and no immediate urgency. * * * * I am not able to act. The physicians attached to the theatre are welcome to ascertain the truth of this statement, and I am willing to receive their visit."

Mademoiselle Rachel then proposes that the suit brought against her be allowed to rest for a while, and requests her comrades will remember that her devotion to the interests of the theatre has occasioned the ruin of her health. She then goes on to say:

"I have notified to you my resignation or my retirement. I am legally entitled to do so, and it is my firm intention to adhere to it. If it is required that I should reiterate my decision within one year from the date of the 14th of October, and if my doing so will put a stop to all difficulties, I am willing to do so."

The offer to submit to the decision of the faculty and the delay of one year thus proposed stopped the suit.

The 17th of December was appointed for the medical visit. It was at the residence of Mademoiselle Rachel, No. 10 Rue de Rivoli, that this scene, worthy the pen of the immortal author of "Le Malade Imaginaire," took place. The doctors, her adversaries, deputed to report her in excellent health, found her on the defensive, guarded by her own physician, Doctor Denis, equally determined to make her out ill before and against all men. This champion, omitting none of the diagnostic and prognostical signs on which he could base his client's malady and establish its nature, asserted that she had been greatly indisposed for the last six weeks; that she suffered from fits of pain in her chest, fever, want of sleep, and progressive falling away. As the patient's appearance did not corroborate this "progressive thinning," she met this objection by the acknowledgment that she had been "improving lately." The visitors, finding no fever or other symptoms to warrant the assertion of illness, decided that a fortnight's rest was all she required to enable her to resume her duties.

But there was another tribunal of far more importance,

whose verdict the *tragédjenne* had not thought of—another far more severe judge summoned her to give a reason for her inaction during four months. The public, in its turn, instituted an inquiry, and the result was not favorable to her. We are seldom disposed to indulgence toward those who deprive us of our pleasures. Her conduct was severely censured, and set down as the capricious malice of an imperious woman. The republican public, less patient and courteous than had been the monarchical one, manifested its opinions rather rudely. In the sort of *vaudeville* review of the year brought out on the stage at its close, some complimentary stanzas to Mademoiselle Rachel having been introduced, were loudly hissed.

Thus closed, for Mademoiselle Rachel, the year 1848, commenced amid such applause. She might comfort herself with the thought that the noisy token of disapprobation that closed her short-lived popular career offered a resemblance to the republican ovations of former times; the hiss that pursued the Roman generals amid their triumphs had been revived for her benefit.

---

## CHAPTER XXI.

1849.

A spoiled Child.—Proscription of "Cinna."—"Le Moineau de Lesbie."—The real Adrienne Lecouvreur.—Funeral Honors to theatrical Talent in France and in England in 1730.—The Adrienne Lecouvreur of Messrs. Scribe and Legouvé.—A characteristic Letter.

THE motives that kept Mademoiselle Rachel from the stage during the last three months of the year 1848 have been given. In accordance with the decision of the faculty, she should have made her appearance on the 2d of January, 1849; but she contrived to suggest so many delays that the long-expected event did not take place until the 13th. The attitude of the public revealed a deeper displeasure than was usually manifested by its coldness on former occasions of reappearance; it was decidedly hostile. It was a sullen, brooding discontent, that was evidently waiting to seize the first opportunity of breaking out in open murmurs. The actress could not mis-

take the feeling that actuated her audience; but, as was always the case with her, the more difficult the situation, the more energy and courage she displayed; the greater the anger of the public, the more winning and fascinating she became. She invariably acted the part of the spoiled child that is sure to conquer in the end, whatever degree of severity may be shown to it at first. The wish to reinstate herself in the favor of the public produced an excitement of her nervous system that resembled depth of feeling, and lent an indescribable charm to her acting. The tragedy was "Andromaque," and never had the actress played with such rare perfection. The result was a free pardon, manifested by immense applause. The Prince President honored the performance with his presence.

Among the signs of the times was the withdrawal of the play of "Cinna," that had been announced for Mademoiselle Rachel's *rentrée*. If she had chosen this tragedy as an expiation of past sins, this Parthian arrow shot at her provisional friends of 1848 was in bad taste. The government of the Prince President showed more tact and judgment; the tragedy of "Cinna" was prohibited, and that of "Andromaque" substituted.

It would indeed have been imprudent to repeat before a *parterre*, still perhaps agitated by remains of the turbulent passions so lately vented, such a line as this:

"Le pire des Estats est l'Etat populaire!"

Neither would it have been proper to offer to the anti-Republican party such allusions as these:

"Un tas d'hommes perdus de dettes et de crimes
Que pressent de mes lois les ordres légitimes
Et qui désesperant de les plus eviter,
Si tout n'est renversé ne sauraient subsister."

This was not the first time lately that "Cinna" had been deemed too plain spoken. The following lines were, indeed, well calculated to set the volcanic heads of the pit in a blaze:

"Les honneurs sont vendus au plus ambitieux,
Ces petits souverains qu'il fait pour une année,
Voyant d'un temps si court leur puissance bornée,
Des plus heureux desseins font avorter le fruit
De peur de le laisser a celui qui les suit."

The press, however, did not fail to comment upon the withdrawal of this tragedy, and to take note of and quote the political allusions that occasioned its proscription. The most anti-Republican of all critics exclaimed, "To this pass has so much liberty reduced us."

On the 22d of March Mademoiselle Rachel appeared in a pretty little comedy, in one act, and in verse, by Monsieur Armand Barthet. "Le Moineau de Lesbie" can not be said to have any plot; it derives all its charm from the light grace and beauty of its details. It was published a few days before the breaking out of the Revolution of February, 1848—a singular time for the appearance of this sweet elegy on the death of a sparrow that died nineteen hundred years before it was written! This *souvenir* of Rome's far-distant past, evoked amid the convulsions of a modern crisis, was adopted by Mademoiselle Rachel one year after its birth, when it was first put upon the stage.

The scene is laid in Rome, about the time of the war between Cæsar and Pompey. The poet *Catullus* is about to turn Benedict; surrounded by many friends, he makes a libation to the gods of his youth, whom he renounces to marry *Sexta*. While the gay party, under the influence of the rich Falernian, extol the pleasures of freedom and lament the abdication of the poet, a message is brought from the bride-elect. *Sexta* has last night had evil dreams; alarmed, she has hastened to consult the augurs, but she would have far more faith in the words of her betrothed than in their promises. Will he come to her? He asks but the time to go to the Latin Gate for the bridal gift that has been ordered—diamonds that are to star that lovely brow—he will be with her forthwith.

During the temporary absence of the bridegroom, his fair friend, the companion of his gayer hours, the charming *Lesbia*, ignorant of the loss that threatens her, enters. The banqueters, dazzled by the fair apparition, endeavor, each in turn, to succeed to her recreant lover, and each is in turn laughed at and dismissed. The narrative of the death of the sparrow gracefully introduces the reconciliation of the lovers.

However foreign this pretty trifle might seem to Mademoi-

selle Rachel's true style, her personification of the gentle *Lesbia* was very pleasing. The scene in which *Lesbia* tries on the wedding ornaments of the future bride was played with a grace, a feminine conception of this coquettish part that was little expected from the representative of the austere muse of tragedy.

The "Moineau de Lesbie" was first played for the benefit of Mademoiselle Anais on the boards of the Italian Opera House. It was the last piece, and midnight had sounded when it was begun. Acted before an audience satiated with the preceding entertainments, worn out with fatigue and half asleep, it had very nearly proved a failure. Brought out on the following Saturday in its proper sphere, the Théâtre Français, it obtained a great success.

In the early part of the eighteenth century a great change was introduced in the manner of reciting on the French stage. The authors of this revolution were the celebrated Baron and the no less celebrated Adrienne Lecouvreur. The father of the latter was a hatter, who, not finding his trade sufficiently lucrative in his own little provincial town, came up to Paris with his family in the hope of bettering his circumstances. He settled near the Théâtre Français, then situated in the Faubourg St. Germain. This proximity afforded Adrienne opportunities for indulging her theatricals, and developed the inclination she had manifested from early childhood. She soon proved that "where there is a will there is a way;" for in 1705, when hardly fifteen years of age, she persuaded some young companions to join her in getting up no less a tragedy than "Polyeucte," followed by the comedy of "Le Deuil." The rehearsals, which took place at a grocer's shop in the neighborhood, were honored by the presence of several persons of distinction. Astonished at the extraordinary talent shown by the hatter's daughter, who played *Pauline*, the visitors mentioned her with enthusiasm to Madame la Présidente Lejay, and that lady built a little theatre in the court-yard of her own hotel, Rue Garancière, for the juvenile company. The select audience, though disposed to indulgence, found they had little need of any. The untutored girl delighted ears that were accustomed to the best actors of the day; her intonation

—correct, pure, and true to nature—formed a striking contrast with that of the performers then in vogue, who declaimed, bawled, or chanted, but never *spoke* their parts. The players of the Comedie Français, getting wind of the favor shown to the band of youthful amateurs, and jealous of the privileges of their own house, represented the case to D'Argenson, the Lieutenant of Police, as an infringement of their rights. An *exempt* and his man were dispatched to bring the delinquents before the dreaded man in authority. Adrienne and her accomplices were terrified beyond measure, but their protectress interposed between them and the lieutenant; a few words explained all, and the order was revoked on condition the performances should be discontinued. But the courage of the little people was not cowed; they managed to get the Grand Prieur interested in their behalf, and, under the protection of the walls of the Temple, were enabled to set at naught the prohibition of the police. What the authority of D'Argenson had failed to accomplish, however, was effected by the spirit of discord. After two or three performances, the self-constituted actors quarreled as though they had been regularly-organized players in ordinary to his majesty, and the company was broken up.

Mademoiselle Lecouvreur did not, as is often the case with young artists, meet with any opposition to her vocation in her own family. Her father encouraged and cultivated her taste by his judicious advice, and the fame of her precocious talent soon procured her offers from provincial managers. She played for some years in Strasburg, and the chief towns of Alsace and Lorraine.

Her success in the provinces facilitated her admittance on the boards of the Théâtre Français, that had once well-nigh put an end to her theatrical career, and she made her *début* there in the month of May in the year 1717, in the character of *Electre*. The sensation she created was very great; she was accounted one of the first actresses of the age, and rivaled Mademoiselle Duclos, who for twenty-four years had been the favorite of the public.

As an *artiste*, Adrienne Lecouvreur left a name for talent of the highest order; she was no less admired for her charms

of person. All grace in her manners, her carriage was so noble and dignified that it was said of her that she was a queen among the players. Simplicity and propriety, correctness and elegance, characterized her style. Her voice, though not of great compass, possessed an infinite variety of inflections and the most moving tones. Her features were fine and sufficiently marked to express strong passions, while her eyes, full of fire, added the most eloquent commentary to what was uttered by her lips. Her figure, though slight, and not above the middle height, was well developed, and seemed much taller on the boards. The good taste and richness of her dress enhanced the gifts of Nature, not the least of which was a gentle, loving heart, a ready wit, and, what is far more valuable, the great art of making that wit a source of pleasure instead of pain to her friends.

No actress better understood than Mademoiselle Lecouvreur the art of listening. Her pantomime was so expressive that every thing the actor who was addressing her said was depicted on her countenance. Her quick comprehension taught her instantly the road to the heart; she gave power and meaning to weak and insignificant lines, and new beauties to fine ones. Consummate in the art of entering into the spirit of the part, she felt what she uttered, and communicated her sensations to her audience. No *tragédienne* ever drew more tears or inspired such terror.

With so many titles to favor, it can not be wondered that this charming woman was dear to all who knew her. With the public she was all in all—pit and boxes agreed in idolizing her. Nor did she, like modern favorites, take advantage of this passionate fondness to show herself exacting, capricious, or imperious. She proved herself worthy of an affection that did honor to both sides, by the most scrupulous punctuality in the discharge of her professional duties. It is recorded of Adrienne Lecouvreur and of her no less famous contemporary, the actor Baron, that, always ready to perform when required, they never had recourse to the hackneyed pretense of indisposition to obtain an exemption from duty. They left to the invention of their successor, the talented Lekain, the convenient fashion of going every year to reap golden

harvests in the provinces or abroad, while they were paid in the capital.

Among the numerous admirers of Mademoiselle Lecouvreur, the one who obtained a lasting hold on her affections was the famous Count Marshal de Saxe, the son of Augustus, King of Poland, and of the beautiful Countess of Konigsmark, as handsome as his mother, and as brave as the god of war. When this romantic knight was planning the conquest of his Duchy of Courland, notwithstanding his high reputation and illustrious birth, he could find no one to join him in raising funds for his adventurous scheme; his own purse was quite inadequate to supply the demands of his courage. His generous mistress realized by the sale of her diamonds the sum of 40,000 livres—equal then to three times that amount in the present day—and compelled him to accept it. Although the expedition was unsuccessful, the hero of it was not the less the lion of the aristocratic circles of the capital, and the beauties of the court employed all the magic of their seductions to draw him into their toils. No less a lady than the Duchess of Bouillon is said to have been at last successful in making him forget the allegiance he owed to the fair Adrienne. Stung with jealousy, the actress seized the only means of revenge in her power. One night, when acting *Phèdre*, instead of addressing to her confidant the passage,

> "Je sais mes perfidies,
> Œnone, et ne suis point de ces femmes hardies,
> Qui goutant dans le crime une tranquille paix,
> Ont su se faire un front qui ne rougit jamais,"

she turned to the conspicuous box where her rival sat in all the pomp of rank, and apostrophized her with all the passionate scorn and indignation she knew so well how to throw into the lines. The public, who understood the real drama, applauded vehemently, and the enraged duchess vowed vengeance. The death of Adrienne Lecouvreur, though arising from natural causes, followed this little scene within so short a time that the tongue of malice might have attempted to show a strange coincidence between them. But the nature of the illness that cut short the career of this celebrated actress was too well known to justify such conjectures, and it was left

to the unscrupulous pens of dramatists and novelists thus wantonly to charge the memory of the high-born and beautiful with so odious a crime.

On the 23d of October, 1730, the English stage lost one of its brightest ornaments in the person of Mrs. Oldfield. The body, after lying several days in the Jerusalem chamber at Westminster, was borne in great pomp to the Abbey, where it was interred among England's high-born and high-honored. The pall-bearers were Lords Delaware and Harvey, Messrs. Dorrington, Hodges, and Cary, and Captain Elliot. The funeral service was performed by Doctor Barker.

On the 17th of March of the same year, Adrienne Lecouvreur, the beloved of the French public, died, and was, perhaps, still more regretted than her English contemporary. Her illness having been too short to permit of a reconciliation with the Church, an intolerant curate refused to permit of her being interred in consecrated ground, although she had left 1000 francs to the Church of St. Sulpice. The body of the lovely and talented creature, immortalized by the pen of Voltaire, was carried in a hackney-coach, in the dead of the night, to the corner of the Rue de Bourgogne, then a marsh, and there buried!

Such a hero and such a heroine, surrounded in their different spheres with so bright a halo of love, glory, and fame, could not fail to tempt the pens of dramatic-authors; but the only successful attempt has been that of Messrs. Scribe and Legouvé. The part of *Adrienne* was offered to Mademoiselle Rachel, but afraid, perhaps, of the transition from the daring crimes and undisguised passions of the Greek and Roman personages to the clandestine midnight intrigues of the modern drama, of the change from the grand Alexandrines of the classic poets to the prose of every-day life, she refused to undertake it, though she had accepted it at first. M. Scribe then gave the part to Mademoiselle Rose Cheri, and it was not until six months after that the play having been read anew at the Théâtre Français, Mademoiselle Rachel accepted it, and it was brought out on the 14th of April of this year.

Having given a slight biographical sketch of Adrienne Lecouvreur, it remains to be seen what romance has added to reality in the drama.

The first act passes in the apartment of the Princess de Bouillon, who is entertained while at her toilet with the gossip of the day brought to *levée* by a *petit abbé*. The rivalry between the two great actresses, Mademoiselle Lecouvreur and Mademoiselle Duclos, the patronage of the latter by the princess herself, much, as the *abbé* remarks, to the surprise of the world of fashion, to whom the intimacy of the prince with Mademoiselle Duclos, his gifts of diamonds, a *petite maison*, &c., are well known—all these items are communicated to the high-born lady, who replies that all this is old news, and that, to have a better hold on her faithless spouse, she has out-generaled him, won over his mistress to her own interests, and is now informed of his doings before he himself knows his own intentions.

Other visitors enter, the *prince* also. The conversation is still of *Mademoiselle Lecouvreur*, who is to come and recite a few scenes at a *soirée* of the *princess;* the arrival of the *Count de Saxe*, his bravery, his exploits, his failure in his expedition, &c., are also subjects of discussion, when the hero himself enters, and is finally left alone with the hostess.

In the drama it is to the *princess* that the *count* is faithless. Hers were the chains that bound him previous to his leaving Paris on his last expedition. *Madame de Bouillon* is now tormented by those vague and apparently groundless suspicions that warn a woman that she has a rival. Why must she be left to learn of a stranger his arrival? Indeed, this has been, with the exception of one to the secretary of state and the cardinal minister, the very first visit he has made. He only arrived last night. Ah! was it the *cardinal* or the *secretary of state* who presented him with that exquisite bouquet in his button-hole? Oh dear, he had quite forgotten: a little flower-girl at the door of the hotel teased him to buy it of her, and—* * * * "And you kindly did so to present it to me," interrupted the subtle lady, possessing herself of the flowers, which the *count* dares not refuse.

The instinct of *Madame de Bouillon* has not deceived her. When he was last in Paris, the noble adventurer had saved from the insults of several gallants flushed with wine the fair *Adrienne Lecouvreur*, on her way home from the theatre.

Since then an intimacy had sprung up between the *protegée* and him whom she deems a poor officer of fortune, serving under the orders of the *Count de Saxe*. The first visit was to her.

The *princess* goes on to speak of the steps she has taken in his behalf to obtain the troops he wishes to levy; the obstacles she has met with in high quarters, the measures she is intending to pursue, &c., &c. The *count*, however, can not in honor permit of her serving him with her influence and credit at court under the idea that he loves her. He can not accept her devotion under false pretenses; he is on the point of undeceiving her, when the re-entrance of the *prince* and *abbé* prevent the confession, and he is obliged to bid her adieu, leaving the flowers in her hands.

The second act passes in the green-room of the Comedie Français. The actors are chatting with lords of the court until their turn comes to go on the stage. *Adrienne* is to play *Roxane;* her professional rival, *Mademoiselle Duclos*, plays in the same tragedy; but it is not the wish to excel her only that animates *Adrienne*. *Maurice*—she only knows him by that name—*Maurice* is in a box to the right: for him she must appear to advantage; for him she must win applause, must be admired.

In the mean while, *Monsieur de Bouillon* has doubts of the fidelity of his mistress; her maid has communicated to him a note, written by *Mademoiselle Duclos* to the *Count de Saxe*, appointing a meeting after the performance in the *petite maison* the *prince's* munificence has lately given her. The enraged *prince* thereupon invites all the actors and actresses to a supper that very night in the *petite maison*, where he will surprise and shame his faithless mistress. *Adrienne* is invited, and, knowing nothing of all these intrigues, accepts, because she is told the *Count de Saxe* will be there—the *count*, whom she is anxious to know, that she may have an opportunity of soliciting of him the advancement of a poor lieutenant in his service.

The third act passes in the *petite maison*. The lady who meets the *count* there is *Madame de Bouillon* herself, who has borrowed the house of *Mademoiselle Duclos*, and commissioned her to make the appointment.

Here we have the proud, the high-born *Princess de Bouillon*, descended from a King of Poland, closely related to the royalty of France, not only acting like a courtesan, but like the veriest idiot! To avoid compromising her reputation, she admits into her confidence an actress known for the lightness of her conduct, the mistress of her own husband; she makes this woman her emissary, her secretary; she intrusts her with a secret that involves her honor—she borrows of her, to carry on an intrigue, the *petite maison* her own husband has furnished, and of which he has a key! Of all the contrivances imagined by dramatists—and they are privileged to invent absurdities—this is the most improbable, the most monstrous.

The conversation between the *princess* and the *count* is, at first, of the obstacles his enemies throw in the way of his political and military schemes. The chief source of anxiety is an unfortunate note for 60,000 livres, to which is appended the signature of the improvident warrior. This note is in the hands of a Swedish nobleman, of whom the embassador of Russia is endeavoring to purchase it, in order to imprison the *count*, and thus put a stop to his conquest of Courland. The *princess* has power and credit at court, but she laments that she has not 60,000 livres to assist him with. The explanation that was to have been made in the morning is given now, but in the very moment when the angry lady insists on knowing who is her rival, the voices of the *prince* and his merry guests are heard in the garden. The lady takes refuge in an adjoining room, yet not so quickly but what the husband catches a glimpse of a woman's dress as he enters through one door and she goes out at another. Convinced that it is *Mademoiselle Duclos*, and that he has it now in his power to mortify and expose her, he orders the doors of the house to be fastened, and forbids any one being let out before daylight. The situation is critical, and the *princess* is inevitably lost but for *Adrienne*, to whom, as she refused to come with him, the *prince* had given a second key to let herself in after the performance was over. *Adrienne* recognizes in the *Count de Saxe* the officer of fortune in whose favor she had come to solicit him. On his whispered assurance that the lady in the next room, on whom the party make such indiscreet comments, is

not *Mademoiselle Duclos*, nor any one in whom he has any interest, saving that honor commands him to see her safe out of the house and prevent her being recognized by any one, the generous actress takes the opportunity, when the company are in another room, to put out the lights and release the prisoner by means of the garden key. There is here an interesting scene in the dark—the rivals, especially the *princess*, endeavor in vain to recognize each other. *Madame de Bouillon*, in her precipitate exit, drops a diamond bracelet given to her by her husband that very morning.

In the fourth act, the *princess*, a prey to jealous rage, for she has had from the *count* himself the confession that he loves another, whereas to *Adrienne* his conduct has only been open to suspicion, the *princess* makes no display of magnanimity; she leaves her recreant lover to his fate, which, in the prosaic form of bailiffs, throws him into prison. Here at least he is separated from her unknown rival, and has ample time to reflect on the advantages he has disdained. In the mean while she endeavors to discover who that rival is. She has but one clew to guide her, the voice. She studies attentively that of every woman who can have had the slightest chance of pleasing the *count*, to catch the sound she heard that night, but in vain, until, at the *soirée* announced in the first act, she recognizes it. The scene that follows when the hostess, thrown off her guard by the discovery, betrays herself to *Adrienne* in her attempt to mortify her before her guests, is the chief one in the drama. The scorn reciprocated by the actress; the bracelet, of which she tells the story without mentioning names, but which the *prince*, not aware of what has passed, coming in, recognizes as *his gift to his wife;* the passage from "Phèdre," spoken by *Adrienne*, and addressed to her rival, whom she stamps with infamy; the entrance of the *count*, whom all think in prison, but who has been secretly liberated by *Adrienne;* his gratitude to the *princess*, who he believes has paid his debts—all these *coups de théâtre* constitute a scene of thrilling interest. The rage with which the rivals, in insolently courteous phrases, tear each other's heart-strings, and the despair of *Adrienne*, who, notwithstanding her momentary triumph, sees *Maurice* attentive to the *princess*, and mistakes

the gratitude he is expressing for protestations of love, close this act.

In the fifth act, *Maurice*, having ascertained that it was to *Adrienne* that he has been indebted for his liberty—that she has sold her diamonds to rescue him whom she believed faithless, *Maurice*, filled with love and gratitude, hastens to offer her all he has in his power, his name and the prospective Duchy of Courland. It is too late; the jealousy of the offended woman has outstripped his love; *Adrienne* is dying. She had received a casket sent in her lover's name, containing the bouquet of the first act: it had been poisoned by the *princess*. The agony and death of the heroine fill the last act.

Aside from the numerous improbabilities of this drama, it can not be denied that the interest is kept up unceasingly, that the situations are exceedingly dramatic, and the characters well drawn. That of *Michonnet*, the old stage-manager, is most excellent.

It has been said that this was the first time that Mademoiselle Rachel was called upon to utter prose on the stage. There was another far more serious objection to the part—one which, *certes*, the authors had not thought of, and which it was left to the genius of Mademoiselle Rachel to discover. In accordance with the fashions of her day, *Adrienne's* hair is powdered!—*Hermione's* Greek brow crowned with powdered tresses! —*Camille's* Roman locks sprinkled with flour!—*Melpomene* in a wig! The thing was not to be thought of: heedless of the anachronism the head presented, heedless of the unpleasant contrast the black hair of *Adrienne* made with the powdered puffs and curls of the other *dramatis personæ*, destroying much of the illusion, Rachel had her will. She subsequently saw the absurdity of the thing, and conformed to the customs of that age.

Notwithstanding this and other disadvantages, and though she was far from equaling in it the triumphs she achieved in her own classic *repertoire*, Mademoiselle Rachel's performance of this charming character was very pleasing. Whatever may be thought to the contrary, it is no easy task for an actress to take upon her the imitation of her own position. To mimic one's self is almost impossible. What is unconsciously done

with ease becomes difficult the moment it is a part to be studied, and the actress runs the risk of setting it on stilts, or lowering it to something too familiar and bordering on vulgarity. The real history of Adrienne Lecouvreur has shown that she was one of those privileged beings who unite the qualities that constitute the happiness of private life with the brilliant ones that secure fame and honor in a public one. As witnesses to her charming disposition we have her own letters, evidently written without study or disguise. Such passages as the following paint the woman better than the pens of biographers could ever hope.

"May 5, 1728.

"You know how dissipated life is in Paris, and what are the duties inseparable to my profession. I spend my days doing nine tenths of the things that are displeasing to me, in making new acquaintances I can not avoid so long as I am in my present position, and which prevent my cultivating the old, or employing my time to my own taste otherwise at home. It is the fashion to dine or sup with me, because some duchesses have thus honored me. These are persons whose goodness and charms would amply satisfy me, but whose society I can not enjoy as I would, because my time belongs to the public, and I must gratify all who would know me, or be set down as impertinent. For all I am so careful, my health, which is weak, causes me to offend; if I am obliged to refuse or fail to attend an invitation to a party from ladies I have never seen, or who care to see me merely from curiosity, or, if I may be permitted to say so, because I am the fashion: 'Truly,' says one, 'what airs she gives herself!' Another adds: 'She acts thus because we are not titled.' If I am serious, for one can not be very gay among people one does not know: 'Is this the woman who has so much wit?' remarks some one of the company. 'Do you not see she scorns us?' says another, 'and that one must know Greek to please her! She goes to Madame Lambert's.' I know not why I tell you these trifles. I have many other matters to speak of, but I happen at this moment to be troubled with a deal of such gossips, and am more than ever possessed with the wish to be free, and have no other study than to please those who feel real

kindness for me, and who satisfy my heart and mind. My vanity finds no compensation in a crowd for the lack of real merit. I do not care to shine; I find ten times more pleasure in saying nothing and in hearing good things, in being in the gentle company of worthy, virtuous people, than I do in being made giddy with all the insipid praises prodigally and at random bestowed on me. It is not that I lack gratitude or the wish to please; but to my mind the approbation of fools is only flattering inasmuch as it is general, and it becomes a burden when it must be purchased by reiterated and especial sacrifices."

The above is extracted from a collection of letters of Mademoiselle Lecouvreur which was published after her death. In order to undertake the character of this remarkable woman, on her own stage too, though at the distance of a century, it was requisitè that her representative should possess no small share of the qualities that adorned her prototype. Mademoiselle Rachel had one great qualification for the part—she could play the gentlewoman with perfect ease. This was indispensable to justify the remark of *Michonnet*, when *Adrienne* is surrounded by ladies of the highest quality, "She figures as well as the whole of them in a *salon*."

In the scenes with the *princess* Mademoiselle Rachel was in her element, and consequently very much admired.

---

## CHAPTER XXII.

### 1849.

Benefit of Mademoiselle Georges.—The Thespian Car in 1650 and in 1849.—*Phèdre* without *Aricie*.—An Audience behind the Age.—A Tune to suit all Governments.—Life in a Stage-coach.—A promised Conversion.—A Play without an Audience.—The Théâtre Français *versus* Mademoiselle Rachel.—Mademoiselle Rachel *condemned* to sing the "Marseillaise."

In June of this year, the incident to which allusion was made in the last chapter in connection with Mademoiselle Georges occurred. This once-petted and idolized actress made

an appeal to old friends who were willing to honor the memories of the past, and to the children of a later generation who might be curious to see once more what their fathers had applauded to the echo. To stimulate the indifference of a public too busy yet with political broils to care for theatricals, Mademoiselle Georges had solicited the aid of Madame Viardot and Mademoiselle Rachel, the present favorites of the few who still had time and inclination for arts and artists. Madame Viardot had responded to the call with the good grace and willing zeal of an artist who understands and sympathizes with griefs that decent pride would fain conceal from the world's eye. Mademoiselle Rachel was not so readily induced to come forward on this occasion offered to her of doing a praiseworthy action, but she finally consented to perform *Eriphile* in "Iphigenie." The *bénéficiare* had, of course, undertaken *Clytemnestra*, the mother who so resolutely defends her child—defends her even against the father who consents to her death, against the priest who exacts it.

The actress who had so much at stake; who felt herself, moreover, sustained and encouraged by the interest with which an attentive audience followed her words, summoned all her energy, her remaining courage and passion, her wavering powers for one last superhuman effort; she put forth all her strength, and success was the reward. The traces that time and illness had worn on those finely-chiseled features momentarily vanished; a faint reflection of the halo of youth and beauty, that ever shone over them when the first empire and she were in their *apogée* of splendor, returned to illumine her decline; the sun of by-gone days regilded the noble ruins. The real monarch whose power seemed to defy fortune was fallen long ago—his imperishable name was embalmed in the eternal pages of history. The mock-queen had outlived her opulence, her fame, her worshipers, to find herself compelled in her age to appeal to a public in whom no vestige of enthusiasm for art seemed to survive.

The announcement of two such names — Mademoiselle Georges and Mademoiselle Rachel—in the same play would, in other times, have drawn crowded houses. It barely sufficed to attract sufficient spectators to fill the *salle* of the Italian

Opera House. A *feuilletonist* of the day remarked very truly that the stage was dead. "We have made," said he, "so much progress within the last eighteen months, in good sense, in fine arts, and in liberty, that not one of the fine arts in this great nation has been left standing. Poetry is dead, painting and sculpture have carried abroad the noble works that maintained them. Howling, clamor, and insult have usurped the place of eloquence. Not a book, not a poet, not a painting—nothing in the past, nothing in the future!"

Even this audience, got together with so much difficulty, could not but do justice to the talent brought before them that night. As for Mademoiselle Rachel, she lost here an opportunity of doing a kind and amiable thing. Had she presented to her elder sister one of the numerous bouquets, or placed on her head one of the wreaths showered on the stage, thunders of applause would have followed the graceful act. But no, the demons of envy and jealousy seemed to possess her. Angered by the approbation bestowed on Mademoiselle Georges, she sullenly refused to play in the "Moineau de Lesbie," announced on the bills for the second piece, and, notwithstanding the injury she was doing the *bénéficiare*, and the pain she caused the young author, obstinately persevered in her refusal. Mademoiselle Rachel thought to punish the public for having dared to applaud another than herself. Madame Viardot, however, having cheerfully come forward to offer her services to make up the deficiency caused by the *tragédienne's* ill-tempered refusal, her delightful voice proved an ample compensation.

The months of June, July, and August were, as usual, devoted to her profitable vacation. While Mademoiselle Rachel hardly deigned to play twice a week in Paris, where she had a fixed salary, she was indefatigable in her vacations, when the more she played the more she earned. It is astonishing what an amount of fatigue the love of gain enabled this frail constitution to bear. She recoiled before no distance, no labor. As long as any thing was to be got her nerves seemed steeled. The itinerary of one of these tours, as furnished by herself in a letter to Mr. Véron, and published by him in the fourth volume of his "Mémoires d'un Bourgeois de Paris," we find

confirmed in every particular. As it alludes to the *congé* of this year, we subjoin it. It is dated May 26th, 1849.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Orleans | 29th, 31st | May. |
| Tours | 1st, 2d | June. |
| Poitiers | 3d, 4th | " |
| Niorl | 5th | " |
| La Rochelles | 6th, 8th | " |
| Rochefort | 7th, 9th | " |
| Saintes | 10th, 12th | " |
| Cognac | 11th, 13th | " |
| Angoulème | 14th, 15th, 17th, 18th | " |
| Perigneux | 19th, 20th | " |
| Libourne | 22d, 23d | " |
| Mont de Marsan | 25th | " |
| Bayonne | 26th, 27th, 29th, 30th | " |
| Pau | 1st, 2d | July. |
| Tarles | 3d, 4th | " |
| Bagnères | 5th | " |
| Auch | 7th, 8th | " |
| Toulouse | 10th, 11th, 13th, 14th | " |
| Narbonne | 16th | " |
| Perpignan | 17th, 18th, 20th, 21st | " |
| Carcassonne | 23d, 24th | " |
| Cahors | 26th, 27th | " |
| Aurillac | 29th, 30th | " |
| Clermont | 1st, 2d | August. |
| Moulins | 3d, 4th | " |
| Nevers | 5th | " |
| Bourges | 6th | " |
| Blois | 8th, 9th | " |
| Le Mans | 10th, 11th | " |
| Laval | 12th | " |
| Rennes | 13th, 14th | " |
| St. Malo | 15th | " |
| Jersey | 17th, 19th, 21st | " |
| Caen | 18th, 20th | " |
| Guernsey | 25th, 26th, 28th, 29th, 31st | " |

To the above performances may be added those given in Bordeaux, Lebourne, and other places not mentioned in Mademoiselle Rachel's letter, as she had not yet signed the agreement at the time it was written. Altogether they number eighty-five in ninety successive days. To form some idea of the fatiguing nature of this departmental tour, it must be borne in mind that not one mile of it was traveled by rail.

An old-fashioned, lumbering French stage-coach, comprising the usual divisions of *coupé*, *intérieur*, *rotonde*, *imperial*, *cabriolet*, and *bâche*, was the vehicle provided for the whole journey. In the *coupé*, which was especially appropriated to the chieftainess, a bed was placed, in order to facilitate as much repose as was consistent with a life of perpetual motion; at night spread out for a couch, in the day it was rolled up for a sofa. The princesses, maids of honor, and damsels of her suite occupied the *intérieur*, and disputed the corner seats. The emperors, kings, and lords of high degree had the *rotonde;* the *imperial* was assigned to the confidants and other small fry, who, though not in very enviable seats so far as regarded sleep, had a fine view of the country from their elevated position. Under the *bâche* were stowed away the trunks, boxes, packages, and bundles containing the wardrobe and stage paraphernalia: *Roxane's* dagger, *Cléopâtra's* worm, *Adrienne's* fatal bouquet, and *Judith's* sabre; regal mantles and poisoned cups, crown jewels and bag wigs.

Mademoiselle Rachel was not perhaps herself aware that she was taking art back to its primitive origin, and that her dramatic *diligence* was neither more nor less than an imitation of the tragic car of Thespis. With all due allowance for the difference of times and the progress of the present age, her caravan recalls that of which Scarron gives so amusing a description in his "Roman Comique."

In consequence of one of the little differences of opinion that sometimes disturbed the concord of the Felix family, Mademoiselle Rachel not always being inclined to place implicit reliance in her brother's arithmetical conclusions, in lieu of Raphael, the usual nominal manager, a M. Prot filled that office on the present occasion.

While the *tragédienne* herself endured without a murmur this continual locomotion, no other member of the company was permitted to allege fatigue as an excuse for non-performance of duty—even indisposition could not, unless very severe, be pleaded to obtain exemption. It was said—we will not vouch for the truth of the report—that on this or some other occasion, one of the actors who had had leeches prescribed for some temporary ailing, was obliged to apply them in the

coach, having been refused permission to stay behind, even for a day.

At Bourges, Mademoiselle Durey fell so severely ill while playing *Aricie* that Mademoiselle Rachel's own maid, Rose, was deputed to take the invalid back to Blois in the privileged *coupé*. Without an *Aricie* even *Phèdre* was incomplete; at least such was the opinion of the spectators, who demanded their money's worth. To satisfy a provincial audience, always behind-hand with the Paris fashions, yet who imagined they were closely imitating the follies of the capital in exacting it as a compensation for the missing bride of *Hippolyte*, Mademoiselle Rachel was obliged to perform the now obsolete "Marsellaise." This complaisance on compulsion was exceedingly distasteful to the politic but no longer political *tragédienne*. Opinion had completely changed color in Paris, and she was not inclined to have it reported there that she was still keeping up in the Departments this hackneyed tragi-comic farce. She would fain have imitated the wisdom of a certain organ-grinder. A passer-by, struck by the more than ordinary discordance of the instrument, which was playing the most incomprehensible, irrecognizable jingle, in which, however, some faint reminiscence of the "Marseillaise" might now and then be distinguished, inquired of the proprietor what might be that tune. "Why, sir, look ye, between ourselves, its an old 'un of the year 1848, and seeing as how it wa'n't the fashion nowadays, I just took and shifted about the wires a bit, and so made up a new tune as 'ull suit any government."

M. Hip. Guichard was the next that gave way to fatigue. Rachel was almost the only one that resisted to the last.

A *jeune première* was sent for to Paris, but she only joined the company at Laval.

At Bordeaux there was great rejoicing and as great subsequent disappointment among the members of the company. They had expected to rest every other day during the engagement at the Grand Theatre; but their implacable Nemesis made arrangements to play on the off-nights at Libourne, eight leagues from Bordeaux. The hours not actually spent on the boards were passed in the coach. When not inclined

to sleep, the occupants of the caravan amused themselves with cards or chatting.

It was during one of these nocturnal trips that Mademoiselle Rachel, relating how, when she had recited scenes from "Polyeucte" at Madame Recamier's, she had been complimented by an archbishop, who had remarked that one who pronounced with such fervor the celebrated passage, "Je sais! je vois! je crois!" could not but be a Christian at heart (see page 52), added, "I most certainly will turn Christian before I die." Whereupon M. Roussel, one of the actors, inquired, "For whose benefit, madam, will this extraordinary performance be given?"

This allusion to her readiness to adopt any part in life that was best suited to her interests was received by the time-serving *tragédienne* with the look which, accompanying the famous *Sortez!* of *Roxane*, always brings down so much applause. M. Roussel was never after engaged to accompany Mademoiselle Rachel on her provincial excursions.

The country towns, though delighted with the honor of the celebrated *tragédienne's* visit, were not always provided with suitable buildings for the performances, and ludicrous incidents occurred in consequence. At Saintes, for instance, on the first night, the actors were dressed, every thing was ready, and the doors stood wide open, but not a spectator came. The dilapidated building had been stayed and propped up with sundry ingenious contrivances, but the report of its unsoundness had got abroad, and no one dared to run the risk of its tumbling down. On the next night, a safer house having been chosen, all fear was banished.

At the expiration of her *conge*, Mademoiselle Rachel had, in the month of September, quietly re-entered on her duties at the Théâtre Français. She continued to fulfill them with the most scrupulous punctuality until the beginning of October. Resolved, for motives which will subsequently appear, to persist in the resignation she had sent in on the 14th of October of the preceding year, and renewed, in accordance with the Decree of Moscow, six months after the first notification, on the 14th of April, 1849, she had taken care to give

* "Au reste, je ne mourrai pas sans être Chrétienne" (sic.)

her antagonists no hold upon her. In the mean while, the *sociétaires*, aware of the loss that resignation entailed upon the company, diligently sought to invalidate it, or at least to win public opinion on their side, and leave to Mademoiselle Rachel all the odium of these continual debates.

In accordance with their plan of leaving no means of conciliation untried, on the 12th of October, two days before the fatal day, the committee wrote to Mademoiselle Rachel to endeavor to persuade her not to forsake a company of which she was the pride, and which had contributed so largely to her fame. To these exhortations were added legal arguments, the most powerful of which was drawn from the 82d clause of the Decree of Moscow. That clause provided that, besides the notification and reiteration of the resignation, the *sociétaire* should, at the time of tendering it, make a declaration specifying that he or she never intended playing again in any theatre, whether French or foreign. Mademoiselle Rachel having omitted to make that declaration, her resignation could have no immediate result until it was renewed in due form. Consequently, she was requested to play *Adrienne Lecouvreur* on the following Tuesday and Saturday.

The lady's answer was short and uncompromising: her resignation, tendered a year ago, renewed six months after, was not a thing of so little moment that she should not have taken into consideration all its consequences and the duties it involved. The committee, not deeming this answer sufficiently explicit, caused the name of Mademoiselle Rachel to be replaced on the playbills.

This act of authority called forth a letter, published in the papers, in which the *tragédienne* complains that the committee sought to compromise her in the eyes of the public by the announcement of her name in the part of *Adrienne*, when they held her resignation, which they knew to be valid. She also energetically repelled the charge of having demanded of her comrades "their money or their lives." Far from which, she asserted that she had declared to all candidates for the management that she was willing to consent to a reduction of salary to facilitate any arrangement conducive to the interests of the Théâtre Français.

"If I retire," added she, "it is because I believe that actors who are their own managers can with difficulty maintain the union so indispensable to their own studies, to the advancement of art, and to the welfare of the theatre. I must have had some experience of this to induce me to renounce the life of applause for which I am indebted to the Parisian public, and for which the happiest private life could afford no compensation."

Thus the Pythoness of the "Marseillaise" acknowledges that she also recognized the necessity of a king, or at least a dictator, and proclaimed that

"Le pire des Etats est l'Etat populaire."

The gauntlet she had thrown down was soon raised. To her letter dated the 14th an answer appeared on the 15th. One of the ablest partisans of her antagonists conducted their side of this newspaper controversy. After giving the reasons that have already been stated why her resignation was null, the committee congratulated itself somewhat ironically at learning that Mademoiselle Rachel intended to consent to a reduction of salary.

"This," said the dear comrades of Mademoiselle Rachel, "is an unexpected resolution, that will not prove one of the least benefits promised to our stage."

But the future manager was advised, instead of taking advantage of the proposed reduction, to exact more regularity in the performance of duties. "For the public, thus boldly invoked," added the writer, "will hardly believe that Mademoiselle Rachel is anxious at the present day for the interests of the theatre, since she has only been able to average there fifty perfomances in nine months, while, during the ninety-two days her *congé* lasted, she has managed to perform eighty-five nights!"

To the reproach of the want of concord the committee opposed an energetic disclaimer. If there was discord, it was urged that the apple was held by Mademoiselle Rachel; for, "the public must at last be told the truth, Mademoiselle Rachel is her own manager; she never receives orders; she gives the law. It is she who fixes the days she chooses to play,

and what parts she will take; she states how many—and the number is considerable—admittances, boxes, stalls, &c., she will have on nights when the interests of the house demand that none be given. * * * Mademoiselle Rachel can not have forgotten the many testimonials of regard which delicacy forbids our recalling. Her name placed on the bills as never was that of Talma, and as was that of Mademoiselle Mars only toward the close of a career as long as it was brilliant, testified sufficiently of our deference to the rank we have given it among us."

After this public rupture no conciliation was possible, and the committee revived the suit at law commenced the preceding year, but left dormant in accordance with Mademoiselle Rachel's desires. On the 31st of October, the nullity of the resignation, on the grounds already mentioned, was again alleged, and a claim was, moreover, put in for damages for infractions of duty on the 14th of October, 1848, and the 13th of January, 1849. M. Marie, the distinguished lawyer who had been Minister of Public Works under the provisional government, undertook the defense of the interests of the committee. The counsel for the *tragédienne* was the no less celebrated M. Delangle.

We shall not attempt to give the eloquent arguments of these two brilliant orators. We shall merely record such of the facts that came to light during the trial as may illustrate the motives that influenced Mademoiselle Rachel's conduct in a contest that did more honor to her head than to her principles of moral rectitude.

Among other charges brought by M. Marie was that of seeking to undermine the company, and to obtain even at that very time, in high quarters, its reconstitution according to her own views.

"Does Mademoiselle Rachel," he exclaimed, "deem us ignorant of what is going on without these doors? Are we not well aware that if there is not in a high quarter the integrity and firmness we find here, the company of the Théâtre Français will be sacrificed? Do we not know the new manager is already selected, and that, in case of success, Mademoiselle Rachel is to re-enter—not into the company; she does not

want *sociétaires*—but in the new management, where she will be all-powerful, where she will enjoy enormous advantages, unconscionable privileges, unlimited *congés*, and hundreds of thousands of francs without the trouble of earning them. It is the knowledge of these things that causes us anxiety."

The impatience of the public was great to hear the counsel for the defense. But on the day appointed for M. Delangle's reply the interest had taken another channel. An incident that occurred on the very day after M. Marie's eloquent argumentation had changed the whole course of the affair, justifying in every point his predictions. On the 15th of November a decree of the Prince President was published, appointing M. Arsène Houssaye *Commissaire Administrateur* of the government at the Théâtre Français. This was a reform that cut deeper than any of those previously attempted; it abolished at once all the privileges conferred on the committee by the 32d article of the Decree of Moscow, privileges that gave them the entire management of the affairs of the theatre. The committee vainly attempted to avoid this spoliation. They declared their readiness to receive M. Arsène Houssaye as commissary of the government, but appealed against his nomination as administrator. The Decree of Moscow was again invoked by M. Marie, who defended the *sociétaires*. But M. Chaix-D'Est-Ange, the distinguished lawyer who pleaded for M. A. Houssaye, grounded his arguments on the motives given in the new decree. He demonstrated that the bad management of the company had made it necessary that the government should manage the funds of the subsidy of which it was responsible. He proved, moreover, that the decree attacked was an act of the administration that the tribunal was incompetent to judge. This argument was admitted by the tribunal, who, on these grounds, rejected the claims of the players.

The solution of the last question took much from the interest of Mademoiselle Rachel's defense, as well as from the issue of the suit in which she was personally engaged with the players. The committee was now a dethroned potentate, and, whatever might be the decision of the judges, it was well known that Mademoiselle Rachel, who refused to submit to

the *sociétaires*, would accept the management of M. Houssaye, tear up her resignation, and re-enter the Théâtre Français. However, as she had had rather severe charges brought against her by M. Marie in the name of her *dear comrades*, she felt obliged to repel them. On the 29th of November M. Delangle undertook this difficult defense, and certainly made up in skill and brilliant oratory what he lacked in good reasons.

The pleading of M. Delangle was of course directly the opposite of M. Marie's. According to him, all the *tragédienne's* conduct had been a continual series of proofs of devotion, zeal, labor, disinterestedness, and abnegation. If she had spoken of resigning in 1846, it was because she was ill—seriously ill. She might have been desirous in 1847 of a change in the management of the company without being at all hostile to it. That management was financially so defective that the company would have inevitably been ruined had not an energetic remedy been applied to the evil. In 1848, during the Revolution, Mademoiselle Rachel had given proofs of the most admirable devotion to the interests of the committee. Her zeal knew no limits. M. Delangle presented this zeal under colors that certainly astonished the public and probably his very client.

"Every day," said the eloquent advocate, "Mademoiselle Rachel, regardless of her ill health, was on the boards. Yes, every day she condemned herself to the 'Marseillaise.' Yes, every evening she sang *this* 'Marseillaise' to the pit. Well, it could not be helped, and by that means the theatre and the treasury were filled, and the *sociétaires* testified their gratitude to Mademoiselle Rachel in the most flattering letter. Since then their language has changed. She had a right to her *congé*, and she took it. On her return to Paris she was deeply wounded by the dismissal of M. Lockroy, and resumed the project of retreat which had suggested itself to her mind in 1846."

After discussing the different points in debate with regard to the damages claimed, he says, "The total of the performances of Mademoiselle Rachel, from the time of her *début* to the present day, have produced to the Théâtre Français the sum of 2,478,482$\frac{22}{100}$ louis." As to the demand of damages,

that was laid aside when the suit was dropped in 1848, the committee had admitted Mademoiselle Rachel's plea of ill health. The salary kept back had been paid, and even the arrears, and with the added courtesy of sending the amount to her house.

Notwithstanding a sharp and witty reply from M. Marie, the decision of the tribunal was in conformity with M. Delangle's pleadings—that is, the resignation was pronounced to be legal, and that there was no case for damages, the committee having admitted the plea of illness and paid the arrears.

Mademoiselle Rachel did not gain her suit at the bar of public opinion, though she had been so successful at the Tribunal Civil of the Seine. The facts that had come to light in the course of the suit revealed principles which, though not reprehensible in the eye of the law, conveyed a very unfavorable impression of the *tragédienne* as an artist and in her social relations with her fellow-players. The old amateurs, partisans of the free company of the Théâtre Français, contrasted her selfish and aggressive behavior with the amiable and conciliating temper of Talma, the constant and laborious devotion of Mademoiselle Mars, even to the close of her long and noble career.

On leaving the court-house, Mademoiselle Rachel hastened to confirm her alliance with M. Arsène Houssaye. She did not, however, show much submission to the chief she condescended to acknowledge, for she spent the remainder of the year at home—probably with a view to prove her assertion that she needed rest—and did not make her reappearance until the beginning of the year 1850.

---

## CHAPTER XXIII.

1850.

*Resumé.*—"Mademoiselle de Belle-Isle."—"Angelo."—"Horace et Lydie."—*Congé* of four Months spent almost entirely in Germany.—The Peasant Aunt.—Mother and Daughter.

So far Mademoiselle Rachel had passed over two thirds of her dramatic career. The first five years, from 1840 to 1845,

were spent in study, in laborious endeavors to reach the place for which Nature had designed her—at times encouraged and sustained, at others capriciously censured or judiciously rebuked by criticism. During the last period, from 1845 to 1850, we have seen her at the *apogée* of her talent. In the third, which remains to be narrated, fortune, not fame, seems to be the only end pursued by the *tragédienne*, the second being valued but as a means of increasing the first. We do not find her employing every leisure hour in learning new parts, acquiring new titles to glory, or writing able comments on some favorite character, making it, as Mrs. Siddons did that of *Lady Macbeth*, the study of her life; of this, indeed, she had never been capable. Mademoiselle Rachel courted fortune, not glory. She continued to appear in the tragedies of the ancient *repertoire* in which she was already known, but gave no revivals. She ventured into the domain of comedy, but the mantle of the inimitable Mademoiselle Mars had not fallen on her shoulders; she gathered no laurels there.

The few efforts she made in the romantic drama, though not all failures, added little to her fame. In the creation of new characters she was hardly more felicitous; of the five, *Lydie*, *Valeria*, *Lady Tartuffe*, *Rosemonde*, and the *Czarine*, the first was too insignificant to count in her *rôles;* the second and fourth were complete failures; the fifth is already forgotten; the third, *Lady Tartuffe*, alone won success. Yet these five characters, three of which hardly survived their first appearance, were all the novelties brought forward by this favorite of the public in return for its constant homage and munificent liberality.

It seems strange that, in this book-teeming age, during the sixteen years that her career lasted, no play really worthy of such an actress was written; and if there had been, it is doubtful if she would have accepted it. With all her extraordinary dramatic talent on the boards, this great *tragédienne* was wholly destitute of taste and judgment in dramatic literature. Of this she gave repeated proofs in her adoption of "Judith," "Catharine II.," "Le Vieux de la Montagne," and, as we shall now see, in "Valeria," "Rosemonde," and the "Czarine." We mention but those that were utter ab-

surdities—the remainder, with the exception of "Virginie," were but partially successful. Lacking discernment in her adoptions, we shall find Mademoiselle Rachel obstinate and capricious in her rejections, taking up with passionate enthusiasm Monsieur St. Ybar's atrocious "Rosemonde," and sustaining a lawsuit rather than keep her word and play Monsieur Legouvé's "Medée." In this last inconsistency she gave the measure of her gratitude and good faith, as well as of her taste and discrimination.

In the period of her career we are now entering Rachel suffers the first and most severe blow in her family affections; she loses Rebecca, her favorite sister. Constantly bent on satisfying her ruling passion, regardless of alienating the favor of her best friends, unheeding the ominous signs of an impending war, she hastens to Russia. On her return she is careful not to miss adding the attraction of her presence at the Théâtre Français to the many others that brought all the world to Paris during the Exhibition. Her final attempt to add new treasures to her store was the voyage to America, where she was taken ill of the disease which threatened to preclude her ever reappearing on the stage. We will continue to trace, as heretofore, year by year, her steps through life.

On the 25th of January, under the new administration of M. Arsène Houssaye, which she had so indefatigably and unscrupulously labored to establish, Mademoiselle Rachel condescended once more to favor the public with her presence. She appeared in the *rôle* of *Mademoiselle de Belle-Isle*. Her success in *Adrienne Lecouvreur* probably induced her to attempt this character, and in so doing she added another to the list of her artistic mistakes. No two *rôles* could be more different—no two situations more dissimilar. In *Adrienne Lecouvreur*, the success of Madame Rachel was rather that of the woman than that of the actress; in that of *Mademoiselle de Belle-Isle* it was neither one nor the other. Tempted by the hope of uniting in her own hands the fan of Mademoiselle Mars and the tragic sceptre, she assumed a character totally unsuited to her, and the result was a total failure.

This drama of Alexander Dumas, having been adapted to the English stage, is too well known to require any notice here.

The character of the *naïve*, timid, shrinking, trembling girl, ignorant of the wiles of a dissolute court, made a tool of by *Madame de St. Prie*, considered in the light of a new toy by the *Duke de Richelieu*, anxious to save her father and compelled to sacrifice her lover, the puppet of others and never once acting of her own will, mixed up in an intrigue her innocence prevents her from perceiving or understanding, was not the heroine for Mademoiselle Rachel; she was too far removed from antique simplicity, too foreign to her tragic powers to do her any honor. The grand pagan figures of which the *tragédienne* was the fitting representative were the victims of Destiny, a power above the gods themselves; the artless child of modern civilization is the passive instrument of a bad woman. Had Mademoiselle Rachel failed in an entirely new creation, she might have had some excuse for the attempt. But she could not even plead ignorance or misconception. She was acting in a play that had been twelve years on the stage; she had undertaken a *rôle* created by an actress who had been unequaled in her own line, and who, moreover, possessed an advantage the tomb can alone confer. Her great qualities were remembered, and contrasted with the faults and shortcomings of her successors; *her* failings, if she had any, were forgotten.

The partisans of the new school who were most anxious to see Mademoiselle Rachel its representative, undaunted by the little success of her performance of *Mademoiselle de Belle-Isle*, prevailed on her to appear in one of Victor Hugo's plays. The drama chosen was "Angelo," and the two heroines were personated by Mademoiselle Rachel and her sister Rebecca on the 18th of May. The sisters had to contend with the recent *souvenirs* of the greatest *comédienne* of her age, Mademoiselle Mars, and the queen of the drama, Madame Dorval, who had been brought together in the two antagonistic characters of *Tisbé* and *Catarina*.

The strongly-marked *rôle* of *Tisbé*, the violent passions that agitate her, love, rage, scorn, all carried to extremes, the powerful situations to which the plot gives rise, were all admirably suited to Mademoiselle Rachel's style and powers. Every one of the qualities she possessed in their utmost degree of perfection were called out here, and *Tisbé* became her best

character in drama, as *Phèdre* was her finest in tragedy. She completely retrieved what she had lost in public opinion by *Mademoiselle de Belle-Isle.* The description given of her on this occasion by Theophile Gautier is too vivid, too graphic to be omitted where the aim is to paint Mademoiselle Rachel in so important a part.

"One of Mademoiselle Rachel's great qualities is that she gives so plastic a realization of the character she represents. In *Phèdre* she is a Greek princess of the heroic ages, in *Tisbé* she personates an Italian courtesan of the sixteenth century. There can be no mistake; sculpture and painting could do no more. This graphic embodiment of the idea exercises a despotic influence on the audience the instant she appears. In tragedy she seems a figure detached from a *bas relief* of Phidias; in drama a Titian or a Bronzino descended from its frame. The illusion is complete. She is a great *artiste* as well as a great actress. Even her beauty is endowed with the most astonishing flexibility; at one time you have before you a sculptured hueless marble, at another a warm Venetian painting. She takes the coloring of the sphere in which she is to move: under the antique colonnade, a statue; under the *renaissance* ceiling, the richly-tinted portrait. Between the scene and the actress the harmony is always perfect."

The acting was no less truthfully described than the external appearance. The graceful indifference with which she listens to the *podesta's* laments, leading him ever away from the goal he seeks to reach, was extremely unaffected. An excellent piece of acting also was the scene where she narrates how her mother, the poor, friendless woman who sang *morlaque* songs on the public squares, was set free as she was being led to execution on the charge of having uttered seditious stanzas against the serene republic of Venice—set free on the intercession of a lovely child, who begged of a senator, her father, that the hapless vagrant's life might be spared. She ran on with a careless haste, as though relating it on compulsion to one incapable of understanding her feelings, yet beneath the rapid, hurried utterance there was an almost painfully intense depth of feeling. In the manner in which she answers evasively the suspicious interrogations of the tyrant,

there was the ease of the thorough-bred lady and the skill of the finished actress. With true feminine impetuosity she runs back to tell *Rodrigo*—oh, nothing—only that "she loves him!" The feline grace, the playful coquetry with which she obtains the key—the key, on which depend several lives—from the *modesta*, was as much admired by some as it was criticised by others, in whose memories the perfect acting of Mademoiselle Mars was still fresh, and who thought, not without reason, there were words that never would be spoken again as they had been by her lips; for instance, the whispered cry of "*pauvre femme!*" One of the great scenes, if one can be singled out where all are fine, is that of the struggle between the two representatives of two great classes of modern society, when the virtuous woman and the courtesan are brought together, and the latter, having at last the mastery, tears her victim with the pitiless fangs of a hyena. Here, irony and insult on one side, terror on the other, are carried to their extremest limits. The oppressed one is free: the worm has turned, the disinherited rides on the neck of the oppressor. All the long-endured shame, the contumely and scorn heaped upon those pariahs of humanity, the implacable ferocity long dormant in those trampled hearts, vibrated in the voice of the actress. The condemned strikes the executioner, the criminal sentences the judge!

None but Hugo, that great star hurled from his high estate by blind vanity and senseless ambition, could have given so splendid, so terrific, so sublime a picture of the courtesan trampling to earth the really innocent wife who has robbed her of her lover. She turns the knife in the wound. And when the crucifix catches her eyes, when she forces the long-sought truth from the trembling victim, how completely disarmed and powerless stands the tigress, so cruelly triumphant but a moment since. The resignation with which the untutored child of love sacrifices her passion and her life to her lover's happiness, to gratitude, is truly sublime.

Mademoiselle Rachel was charged with overdoing her part; of reminding the spectator of Orestes pursued by the Furies; of seeking to irritate *Rodolfo* with a violence which, if he knew any thing of the heart of woman, should have brought him to

his senses. She incites, provokes, and hurries him to the commission of the deed. Mademoiselle Mars, on the contrary, led *Rodolfo* to strike her by the most provoking calmness. Mademoiselle Rachel made it plain that she wished to be killed, and instantly. Mademoiselle Mars, even while accusing herself of the atrocious crime that is to rouse the lover to blind fury, trembled, hesitated, and, as she *really* wished to die, was careful not to excite the suspicion that might thwart her fatal design.

It was, however, scarcely just to institute a comparison between the *skill* of Mademoiselle Rachel and that of the most consummate actress that had ever trod those boards. Mademoiselle Mars attained perfection in her art by long years of experience and constant practice. She left nothing to chance, nothing to accident, but, by a diligent study of the work in all its bearings, continually sought the intention of the author.

"Angelo" derived additional interest from the fact that the two sisters played the two rivals. Rebecca lacked not tenderness—her acting revealed great depth of feeling—there was, perhaps, too unreserved, too free a display of it, to suit the part of the noble patrician dame who, even in the most trying moments, in the most passionate scenes, never gives way to her emotion with unguarded, unreserved freedom.

On the 19th of June Mademoiselle Rachel created the part of the heroine of Monsieur Ponsard's little one-act play, "Horace et Lydie." The acceptation "Le Moineau de Lesbie" had met with probably induced the champion of the classic school to try his hand at a similar bit of modernized antiquity. The theme of this little piece is the world-old-ever-new one of a love-quarrel. It is charmingly written; it reads delightfully; but on the stage it is dull, flat, lifeless, and insipid beyond measure. It is, perhaps, not to be regretted that it proved an utter failure, as its success would indubitably have brought before the public of the nineteenth century all the courtesans of ancient Greece and Rome, in addition to the modern Lamias and Phrynes which the bad taste of the present generation tolerates on the stage.

*Pauline*—the chaste *Pauline*, metamorphosed a second time into a Roman "*Dame aux Camelias*," sustained neither the

character nor the piece. The chief attraction of this attempt to portray such scenes of Roman private life as good taste would wish banished from the boards, was the style of costume which in one of the lady's attitudes revealed more of the leg than is usually exhibited.

This year the *congé* of Mademoiselle Rachel lasted four months, during which she performed in London, in Hamburg, in Berlin, in Dresden, in Potsdam. "Le Moineau de Lesbie" and "Polyeucte" were performed "by command" before the Prussian court, the Count de Chambord being also present. The queen condescended to send for Mademoiselle Rachel, whom she complimented very highly.

The King of Prussia never missed a performance, going sometimes alone to his *loge*. He seemed particularly to enjoy the after-pieces, laughing as heartily at the fun contained in them as any *bon bourgeois de Paris* could have done.

When the company of a theatre is called to play before the court, each member gets a "gratification" of a hundred francs. In preceding reigns the actors of the Théâtre Français were the only ones ever admitted to act at the court of France. The present emperor has had the companies of nearly all the theatres called in succession to play at court.

The Germans testify their approbation by frequent recalling of the actors. In Vienna Mademoiselle Rachel was recalled one night seventeen times, another nineteen, a third twenty-one!

It was during this excursion through Germany that Mademoiselle Rachel gave another proof of the respect for family ties we have mentioned as characterizing her in an eminent degree.

An old woman, dressed in the Sunday garb of the lower classes, made inquiry at the hotel where the celebrated actress was stopping, saying that she had been told her niece, Mademoiselle Rachel Felix, was there, and she wished to see her. She was referred to Rose, the waiting-maid, who took her in to her mistress. Far from manifesting the annoyance of a *parvenu* at this claim of relationship put forth by one in such poor circumstances, the niece was extremely kind to her peasant aunt, made her stop and dine with her, and invited

her to be with her while she was in town, and when she left settled upon her a sum which, in that country, was amply sufficient to make her comfortable for her life.

Another instance of the respect exacted by the parents even of this daughter, of whom, at the same time, they were the most obsequious flatterers, we will give in the words of the narrator, Mademoiselle Aveuel.

"We were at this epoch in Berlin, and Mademoiselle Rachel, wishing to present some *souvenir* of her gratitude to the Princess Charlotte of Prussia, concluded that the most appropriate thing, as well as the most likely to please the august lady who honored her with her patronage, was a very magnificent copy of Emilie Augier's 'Diane,' a unique copy presented to Rachel by the author, and containing on the fly-leaf some complimentary stanzas to herself. A note was to accompany this *envoi*, and to assist in inditing with due brevity and respect the important epistle, I was called into council. While thus engaged, Mademoiselle Rachel, requiring the services of a servant, requested her mother to ring the bell. The old lady arose for that purpose, but not as quickly as the impatient daughter thought necessary, and the latter reiterated rather peremptorily, 'Mais sonnez donc, ma mère.' The old lady stopped short, and, altering her course toward the door, left the room, saying, with the offended dignity of a duchess, 'Sonnez vous même, ma fille.' Rachel made no reply, but when the note was dispatched, hastened to her mother's room to apologize, and entreat her forgiveness of her imperious behavior."

This was certainly a strange family. Whenever any thing occurred to interrupt the harmony between the sisters, they would give way to the most furious and uncontrolled passion, which they vented in every bitter and fierce expression that came uppermost. The only one who always preserved a certain dignity, even in her most angry moods, was Rachel; the most violent and inconsiderate was Sarah. When any dispute between Rachel and the other members of the family occurs, it is finally made up by the gift of some trinket—good temper and concord must be repurchased by the richer one.

But in illness and misfortune, on any real occasion of grief or need, no devotion can be more complete than that shown by all the other members of the family to the afflicted one.

---

## CHAPTER XXIV.

1851.

State of Theatricals in 1851.—Despotic Influence of Stars and its baneful Results.—Dramatic Authors manufacturers to order.—"Valeria."—*Congé* of five Months and a half.—Italy.—Successor of Saint Peter and the Children of Israel.—Rebecca.

The year 1851, to which the *coup d'état* that took place at its close has given such historical importance, was not favorable to the drama. Society, shaken to its foundations in 1848, had had breathing time in 1849, and more especially in 1850; but its state at that epoch was one of transition, and could not be of long duration. The Presidential Republic was but a temporary possibility, that afforded a sort of truce to all parties, but all were alike impatient for its cessation. Each, ambitious of pre-eminence and anticipating the victory, watched its antagonists, weighed its own strength, and awaited the opportunity to offer battle and obtain the mastery. The wounds inflicted by the Revolution of 1848 were not yet healed; the penury that had been its consequence had not yet ceased; few could yet command that overplus which is usually devoted to procuring amusements. Minds were too much preoccupied with considerations of vital importance to afford room for literature or theatricals. Anxiety for the future and the uneasiness arising from the unsettled state of politics absorbed every thought. The only theatres that possessed any attraction were those that gave plays containing allusions and political satires. These, indeed, were crowded, and the applause with which such plays were received was loud, tumultuous, and prolonged. It was quite a relief to be able in public, and in common, to ridicule, hiss, and laugh at all the crazy ideas, all the paradoxical absurdities, all the dangerous systems, from the ruinous and subversive application of which so narrow an escape had been made.

Plays of this description, however, were not within the limits of the Théâtre Français: they belonged to the jurisdiction of the minor theatres, among which, for this class of performances, the Vaudeville took the lead. No other theatre made as good use of the sceptre of Momus, or applied it so wittily and lustily on the crackbrained pates of the day. Among the many pieces of this style suggested by late events, two were particularly excellent of their kind: "La Proprieté c'est le Vol," and "Les Trois Parties de la Foire aux Idées." Frivolous as these works may be deemed, not to mention the powerful influence they had on public opinion would be an omission in the history of the great effects that have resulted from petty causes. Their light sayings and piquant epigrams aroused the dormant good sense of the people; their witty sarcasms gave rise to serious reflections; and as each spectator retired to his home, he felt grieved and ashamed that he should have been the dupe and the victim of so many follies.

In the mean time, the Théâtre Français, deprived of the resource of chanting the "Marseillaise," was reduced to its master-pieces, the beauties of which the public had neither time nor inclination to appreciate. The receipts were by no means brilliant. During this year there was not one revival from the rich old classic *repertory*, and but one creation that might be called a two-fold one, but which was as unfortunate as it was singular. Like almost all deformities, this monstrous conception scarcely outlived its birth.

Criticism this year took no notice whatever of Mademoiselle Rachel save on the occasion of this strange innovation introduced to attract the notice of the public. It succeeded in momentarily dispelling the lethargic indifference manifested toward her, but not exactly in the way she would have chosen.

There is a rock that fortunate and successful ambition seldom avoids, and which eventually proves its ruin—a rock on which celebrities of all kinds are too frequently wrecked: that rock is the exaggeration of their own personality by the absorption of all surrounding objects. When talent of a superior order has become so blinded by vanity that it has the most utter contempt for its atmosphere, and decrees an apotheosis to its own merits, it is infallibly a premonitory sign of a

decline in public opinion; disinterested admiration retires; the new divinity disdains the homage of simple, truthful faith; the votaries attached by interest alone surround the altar and form a solitary group. If one of these satellites fall away, the voluntary exile becomes a dangerous enemy; no bitterness can equal that of the apostate against his former creed.

Thus did it happen in the world of art of which Mademoiselle Rachel was the centre and the queen. She attempted with her comrades, with the public, with the press, to exert a crushing despotism—she created around her the most complete solitude. Toward the close of her career she had alienated a number of the partisans she had had among the members of the press, and consequently a portion of the public. Sundry of her acts during the last few years had been stamped with that excessive egotism that has its source in vainglorious blindness, producing selfish forgetfulness, or disregard of social ties and social duties.

These errors of the heart had made numerous enemies, of whose hostility and power she was not ignorant, as will be shown hereafter in one of her own letters to M. Legouvé.

It can not be denied that her arbitrary manner toward the Théâtre Français; her voyages to Russia and to America—the first when France was on the point of a rupture with that country; the second undertaken at the time of the Exposition Universelle, when France was enjoying with legitimate pride the pleasure of displaying her treasures of art and industry to the admiring eyes of foreign nations—each time at epochs and under circumstances that made them doubly distasteful to the public that had been her kind and constant patron throughout her career—all these errors of tact had thrown a shadow on her reputation as an *artiste*, and given a bad opinion of her heart.

All the petty hates—the brooding, impotent desires for revenge amassed in many hearts, smarting under some injustice, some long-remembered insult, eagerly embraced the opportunity of revenge the arrival of Madame Ristori subsequently afforded them, well knowing that every leaf added to her rival's crown would be looked upon by the jealous Jewess as taken from her own; that every token of approbation to the foreign star was a stab to that selfish cosmopolitan.

But we anticipate on the yet unnarrated epoch of that total eclipse. Suffice it for the present that we have shown the reason why such plays as "Valeria" and "Rosemonde" came to be received by the once severe *comité de lecture* of the most enlightened and most severe stage in the world. Under such a *régime*, the *coulisses* of the theatre necessarily became a sort of little *Bourse*, the *feuilletons* of criticism became bills of exchange, dramatic authors manufacturers to order, and the labors of intellect manufactured goods.

To this class of produce does "Valeria" belong. This drama, in five acts and in verse, the joint production of Messieurs August Maquet and Jules Lacroix, was constructed as a sort of pedestal on which the idol might be exhibited on high in two characters—as a *tragédienne* and a *cantatrice*—two very opposite *rôles*, and the last very inappropriate to the purpose the authors wished to carry out—the glorification of Mademoiselle Rachel. The performance, notwithstanding the real talent and the endeavors of the actress, was a dead failure. She had demanded the lion's share—she had it in the non-success.

This drama, historical only in the names of the personages, and purely of invention as to the incidents and plot, pertains, with regard to the latter point, to that class of romances of which, under the *pseudonyme* of Alexander Dumas, M. Maquet has been one of the most indefatigable and fertile producers.

The method most frequently made use of by these innovating historians is the rehabilitation of their heroes in the very teeth of contradictory historical facts. Authoritative documents are summarily set aside, and their place is usurped by absurd fancies, gratuitous hypotheses, and outrageous inventions, entirely at variance with time-consecrated tradition—Livy, Tacitus, and Juvenal are thrust aside, and peremptorily silenced by these modern remodelers of ancient *dramatis personæ*.

"Valeria" is, after all, but a very long paradox, full of an affectation of erudition, the plot being that of a melo-drama halting on historical crutches. The language is versified prose.

A *hemistich* of Juvenal in his satire, "Titulum mentita Lysicæ," accuses *Messalina* of having, under a borrowed name,

perambulated the streets of Rome at night. Did the poet adopt too lightly the malicious slanders of the *chronique scandaleuse*, or was it in the name of rigid, inflexible truth that he stigmatized the imperial courtesan? What has remained an unsolved question so many centuries might still be left a doubt for future generations; but surely there is no cause why the contrary supposition should be warmly supported against the authority of the Latin poet, and without the corroborative testimony of a single line in the ancients.

The best proof that the authors were somewhat dubious of the reception their whitewashed heroine would meet from the public was that they dared not present her under her well-known name—the name that has descended to us as the synonym of every thing utterly and irretrievably vicious in woman, as the name of the proverbially infamous creature that was depraved among the depraved; so foul, indeed, that she added a darker stain to the throne whose seat was desecrated by the imbecility of a Claude, whose steps supported a Narcissus, a Pallas, *parvenus* of favor, freedmen who had earned their court promotion, not by talent, like Horace, but by villainous pandering to vice and the ready espionage of the moment. They dared not call her *Messaline;* they chose her less-known appellation of *Valeria*, and under this title she has undergone a complete transfiguration; they made this creature of their own invention, if not a vestal, at least the friend of *Elia*, a priestess of Vesta on whose bosom her immaculate spirit takes flight.

To facilitate this startling assertion, the authors have made use of a modern invention. *Valeria*, the empress, has a sister, *Lysisca*, who is in exterior appearance exactly her counterpart, while in morals she is diametrically her opposite. This sister, forsaken in her infancy, has become the most notorious courtesan in the Roman empire; her beauty, her adventures, are the common talk. *Valeria*, the imperial sister, chaste, noble-minded, generous, and compassionate as she is fair, is guided in all she does by maternal ambition. She is unceasingly devising the means of foiling the intrigues of *Agrippina*, her husband's niece, who seeks to raise her own son *Domitius* —afterward *Nero*—to power at the expense of *Britannicus*, the son of *Valeria*.

The rival mothers find their pretensions supported by the two freedmen. *Pallas* intrigues for *Agrippina; Narcissus* watches over the safety of the empress, prevents her falling into the toils of her enemies, or rescues her when she has done so. Each has his own interest; ambition alone stimulates the zeal of *Pallas*, ambition and love that of *Narcissus*. Thus the latter, though seeking every means of securing the triumph of *Valeria*, persecutes to the utmost of his power the only honest man in the play, *Silius*, a young-old Roman, cut out on the pattern of Corneille's heroes, and a very secondary *rôle*, although meant to contrast with that of *Claude*.

The *emperor* himself divides with *Mnester*, a dancer, the favorite lover of *Lysisca*, the task of amusing the public. This *Claude*, by the way, was a Frenchman, born in Lyons, the first of his nation raised to the throne of the Cæsars, and it is strange the authors should have chosen to bring in this weak, pedantic, drunken buffoon, loading him, moreover, with all the odium they could add to the character. *Claude's* hobby is to be always judging causes: he judges *Mnester* because he would not dance, *Silius* because he has in his portico busts of Brutus and Cassius, but forgives him on *Valeria's* remark that they are works of art which even he, the emperor, might be willing to admire. *Silius*, however, has committed a more unpardonable crime. A letter, intercepted by *Narcissus*, is laid before the *emperor;* in this fatal epistle the stern young Roman, writing to his friend *Cecina*, has said that "folly united to crime" occupied the imperial throne. *Silius*, condemned to the lions, kills the monster that was to devour him, and is taken to his own house merely wounded. It seems he had seen *Lysisca* and mistaken her for the *empress*, and hence his cruel remark. *Cecina*, his friend, falls into the same error; and all the *dramatis personæ*, whether unintentionally or maliciously, committing the same mistake from beginning to end of the five acts, the result is the most irretrievable confusion, the most intricate *imbroglio* conceivable, amid which the few interesting situations and fine passages are quite lost.

The second act is unquestionably the least objectionable. The scene passes in the dwelling of the wounded *Silius*, whose friends are preparing his flight. *Valeria*, taking the opportu-

nity of one of *Claude's* orgies, comes alone, and at night, to justify herself to the only man whose esteem she deems worth possessing. She owns her love for him who slandered without knowing her, and ends by asking the support of his strong arm and influence with the people for her son, continually exposed to perish by the manœuvres of the opposite faction. It never appears clearly whether the ruling passion is the maternal ambition of the *empress* or the love of *Valeria* for *Silius*. While virtuous and political speeches are interchanged in the house of *Silius*, in the opposite dwelling *Lysisca* is entertaining her lover, *Mnester*, in the street, *Agrippina* and her spies are on the watch, and *Narcissus* and his spies are letting themselves into the house of *Silius* through a private door. *Lysisca* is arrested, to be used as a tool of *Agrippina*, and *Valeria* is enabled, under the escort of *Narcissus*, to return to Mount Palatine.

The remainder of the drama is a series of improbabilities. In the absence of the empress, who is openly gone to Baïa under pretense of her son's health, but in reality to prepare a revolution, the courtesan, *Lysisca*, and her lover, *Mnester*, are brought into a room of the palace, where a splendid banquet awaits them, and they are repeatedly told to "consider themselves at home." At first the worthy pair are somewhat frightened as well as surprised, but finally, with the assistance of several cups of the rich wines so temptingly placed within their reach, the birds become accustomed to their splendid cage. *Lysisca* especially gets so unconcerned, so merry with the aforesaid help, that she indulges in a Bacchanalian song of an ultra-anacreontic taste. This scene has been got up for the edification of *Claude*, who, drunk with *Hippomane*, is brought by *Agrippina* to witness the scandalous debauchery of the supposititious *empress*, whom he imagined on the way to Baïa. In the effervescence of his horse-tipsy rage he signs a deed of divorce, which has been drawn up in readiness, and the sentence of death follows. But at that moment the real *Valeria*, surrounded by her guards, makes her appearance. The sottish *emperor* does not see her, for he has just fallen asleep on the couch; the baffled conspirators can not get him away, but manage to stab the dancer and

hurry off *Lysisca*, who is kept by them for some future occasion. *Pallas* had given orders for the assassination of the *empress* at Baïa, but the wary *Narcissus* had warned and made her hasten back.

*Valeria*, triumphant, surrounded by the *Generals Corbulon*, *Plantius*, and others, free by the act of divorce, is secure, for she holds *Claude* prisoner, and has given orders that to her alone he can be delivered. *Valeria* is going to reign, and with her innocence and virtue. She is about to marry *Silius*, when his friend *Cecina* arrives, and spoils every thing. *Cecina* swears in the presence of the army and on the innocent head of her child that the imperial *Valeria* is a common courtesan. The rest may be easily guessed—the scandalized generals beat a hasty retreat. *Claude*, delivered by *Pallas*, and *Lysisca*, whom the guards mistake for the *empress*, is reinstated on the throne, and sends a centurion to the forsaken *Valeria* with the order for her death. Meanwhile the assassination and decapitation of *Lysisca*, accomplished by *Agrippina* and *Pallas*, render all ulterior justification impossible, and leave the memory of the *empresss* blackened throughout all ages. This last comforting news is told to *Valeria* by *Narcissus*, who finds out the existence of the sister and her death at the same time. The discovery is, however, very satisfactory to *Silius*, who promises to survive the empress to publish the facts and clear her fame. It is not very likely that *Agrippina*, who comes in to enjoy her rival's death-pangs, will let him perform this duty. The dying agony of *Valeria* is rendered ridiculous by the absurd prophecy with which she curses her rival.

"Ton fils sera Néron, ton fils tuera sa mère!"

The two pens that worked on this drama are easily distinguishable; the designer, who drew up the plan, and the poet, who scattered here and there some fine verses, that sparkle amid the rubbish with which it is filled. Above all is distinctly apparent the imperious will of the actress, who exacted that all the interest should centre in her part, and that the other characters should be reduced to the most insignificant proportions. In her eagerness to deprive every one else of any share of success, she assumed the responsibility of a failure the most complete and irretrievable.

The difficulty of representing two characters in which physical and moral attributes are so extraordinarily similar and dissimilar, was enhanced by the obvious attempts the actress made to establish a difference. She spoke the part of *Valeria* in a deep bass, and that of *Lysisca* in her sharpest keys. The effect produced by these alternate chest and head notes was far from agreeable. As for the song, she had much better have left that out altogether; singing was not her *forte*, and of all songs this certainly was in the worst taste.

This year Mademoiselle Rachel prolonged her *congé* to five months and a half. She left Paris on the 31st of May, and, after giving two performances in Boulogne, proceeded to London, where she had secured a very profitable engagement for two months. She received of Mr. Mitchell 10,000 francs for twenty-five performances, free of all expense, even to that of her hotel bills.

From England she returned to the Continent, and performed in the following towns: Antwerp, Brussels, Liege, Namur, Cologne, Berlin, Prague, Vienna, Pesth, Gratz, Lintz, Trieste, Venice, Milan, Navarre, Turin, Genoa, Naples, Rome, Florence, and Livourne, returning *via* Marseilles to Paris. She had been extremely well received during this tour. Raphael, who was the manager of his sister's company, had made a preliminary excursion, and prepared the way for her. At Turin the young king placed at her disposal, free of expense, the Teatro Regio, which is always closed during the summer. Mademoiselle Rachel had decidedly furthered her own interests when she obtained a change in the administration that permitted of such excursions.

It was reported that when Rachel was in Rome she had been desirous of receiving baptism at the hands of the Holy Father. She had been several times heard to announce her determination to adopt Catholicism, but it is difficult to ascertain if one so accustomed to play a part off as well as on the stage was ever really sincere. She may, however, have been so at the moment, under the powerful influence of certain impressions. Hers was a very excitable nature, and it was difficult for an *artiste* possessing to so high a degree the sense of the grand and the beautiful not to be deeply struck with

the solemnity, pomp, and splendor with which the Church celebrates its mysteries.

We will not vouch for the truth of the report that Rachel met, *as by chance*—it having been previously arranged thus—his holiness in the gardens of the Vatican, and, kneeling, avowed her firm resolve to be a Christian.* But we have the authority of an eye-witness of undoubted veracity for her behavior on her return from her visit to St. Paul's and the Vatican. She came into the room where her sister Rebecca and one other person were sitting, and for some time remained mute and absorbed in thought, walking up and down with knit brow and abrupt, agitated gestures. When she spoke at last it was to utter ejaculations of admiration and awe. To the questions addressed to her she returned no direct answer, but exclaimed in broken, disjointed phrases, "Yes, *this* is the true faith. This is the God-inspired creed. None other could have accomplished such works. Truly, I will be one of them yet."

Rebecca heard this with intense indignation, and remonstrated with extreme warmth against the proposed apostasy, repeating at intervals, as though to clinch her arguments, "Oh, what would Sarah say! Oh, how I wish Sarah were here!" The temper of Sarah was dreaded by all the family, and had its weight even on Rachel.

The witness of this singular scene was astonished at the patience with which the elder sister endured the reproaches of the younger. The *tragédienne* vouchsafed no reply, but, throwing herself on the bed, remained there engrossed in her own reflections.

The other members of the Felix family, though not practicers of its forms, are stanch adherents of their faith. Rebecca had much of Rachel's serious, contemplative turn of mind. She never could understand a jest on certain subjects. The female members of the company having gone to visit the

* However improbable this may appear, it is not more so than the very recent presentation of a well-known Israelite banker, his wife and daughter, to the vicegerent of Christ and successor of St. Peter. The conversion of a soul was surely of more value than the probable benefits of a railway.

Church of St. Jean de Lateran, those who were Catholics undertook the ascent of the stairs in the usual manner. An ancient dame of very stout proportions preceded them, and the aspect she presented to those behind her, as she crept slowly up on her knees, was so exceedingly ludicrous, that, after sundry vain attempts to preserve a becoming gravity, the young women found it impossible to suppress a titter. When they reached the top, Rebecca, who had ascended the other way, and had seen their untimely merriment, severely reproached them:

"Were I a Christian," said she, "and performing an act I deemed meritorious in the sight of my God, I would die rather than indulge in such profane laughter!"

---

## CHAPTER XXV.

1852.

"Diane."—"Louise de Lignerolles."—Invitation from the King of Prussia.—Severe Illness.—Homœopathic Doctor.—Appearance at the new Palace of Potsdam.—Presentation to the Empress of Russia.—The Czar Nicholas and Mademoiselle Rachel.—Return to Paris.—Prolongation of Life.—"Aspasie."—"Rosemonde."

On the 23d of February of this year Mademoiselle Rachel appeared in the part of *Diane*, in Emilie Augier's drama. The greatest fault of this work is that its chief points are copied from Victor Hugo's "Marian Delorme," with this difference, that what are in the latter beauties, are in the former defects. The age—that of Louis XIII.—the subject—the edict against dueling—several of the scenes and several of the personages, present a striking resemblance. The charming *Marian Delorme* is spoiled by being metamorphosed into a very uninteresting spinster, and *Didier*, that splendid figure of romance, into a hair-brained boy-brother. This evident imitation is the more surprising, if it was intentional, as M. Augier is a partisan of the classic school, and, consequently, no admirer of the great innovator.

Between the talent of the two authors and the respective merits of their works no comparison can be established. Even

were the drama of M. Augier cut out in as masterly a style as that of Victor Hugo, it would yet lack the magnificent poetry in which the latter has arrayed his story.

Notwithstanding the imitation that appears in the very first act, the play of "Diane" opens well. The heroine and her brother are the descendants of an ancient house, shorn of its former splendor, and reduced to so low an ebb that *Diane*, who is the elder, is compelled to resort to all the expedients of proud poverty to maintain her beloved and only brother in his rank and station. The youth, the last male of a long line of nobles, is the object of the most affectionate and watchful solicitude on the part of the fair young mother-sister. It is midnight, and, late as is the hour, *Diane* and *Parmejon*, a faithful old follower—a sort of Caleb Balderstone—are busily engaged making a doublet for the heir. The good old man gives a very pretty enumeration of the divers trades and callings he has exercised in behalf of the beloved boy.

"Que de metiers il m'a fait faire le jeune homme!"

The illustrious pair is suddenly startled by the irruption of four young gallants, Messieurs *de Pienne*, *de Boissy*, *de Fargy*, and *de Cruas*, in pursuit of a fair maiden, *Marguerite*, who, on her way from midnight mass, was going to the Hotel de Rohan. A young girl of respectable parentage treading the streets of Paris at that hour and alone, when we have it, on the authority of Boileau, that thirty years later the streets of the capital of the most civilized country in the world were, at eight o'clock in the evening, *des coupe gorges*, shows bad choice of hours, at all events. The first act goes roundly to work, for in this scene we have the lady whose house has been so unceremoniously invaded, falling in love with one of the wretches whom she has just—and very properly—ordered out, and the wretch, *M. de Pienne*, at once reciprocates. *M. Paul*, the brother, who makes his *entrée* through the balcony, falls in love with the errant *demoiselle*, who is no less suddenly impressed in his favor. The scene between old *Parmejon* and young *De Pienne* is full of energy. The aged servitor draws his sword to repel the insolent intruder, who, in derision, affects to parry merely with his cane. *Diane* stops the

unequal combat, and the noblemen, admiring her divinity, respectfully apologize and retire, hat in hand. The kindly expostulations of the sister with her too flighty brother are very sweetly written, and, indeed, the whole of this act is lively and replete with interest.

The second act contains what is intended for the main subject, the groundwork of the whole drama—a conspiration against the hero of the day, *Cardinal de Richelieu*. In "Marion Delorme," Victor Hugo has also chosen this great personage as the Fate in whose powerful grasp the threads of all these petty existences are held. He also raised an altar to that great genius, but—and there is the greatest proof of his superiority—he left the idol behind the veil. In Hugo's play, *Richelieu* never appears in person; he is every where felt; he is seen nowhere; he moves all the wires; the *dramatis personæ* are, by their own showing, but the puppets of his will. The other had his choice of two great symbols, *Louis XIII.* and *Richelieu;* he chose the king for the material image, and the cardinal for the presiding genius—the WILL.

"Et que dit de la cour le roi?
Le cardinal n'est pas content du tout!
Le roi se porte bien sans doute?
Non pas! le cardinal a la fievre ou la goutte."

The cardinal is the main-spring, the soul of all things; the very omission of any visible presence imparts a mysterious awe to the most seemingly insignificant things overshadowed by his influence.

But M. Augier was of opinion that he could not have too many great personages figuring ostensibly on his canvas, and boldly laid hands on both—the timid, wavering, passive, melancholy monarch, and his energetic, iron-willed, stern minister. The conspiracy itself is a sort of child's play, neither exciting nor interesting; there is no justifiable hatred, no well-grounded motive; those engaged in it play at conspiracy as they would at *lansquenet*, merely as a pastime. Why or how they mean to kill the cardinal, they do not seem to know. None of the conspirators are at all thinking of their enterprise. The *Duchess de Rohan*, who lends her house to their meetings, is solely thinking of *M. de Pienne; M. de Pienne* of *Diane; M.*

*de Fargy* and *M. de Boissy* are little else than supernumeraries. As for *Marguerite's* father, the fourth plotter, he is a caricature with whom no man in his senses would risk his head.

In this second act we are at the duchess's hotel, where all the personages save the king, his minister, and his minister's minister, *Laffemas*, are present. The duchess, who has been solicited by her god-daughter, *Marguerite*, to interfere to prevent her marriage with *M. de Cruas*, to whom her father has promised her, the duchess tells *De Cruas* no gallant gentleman would wish to obtain a lady's hand against her will. *De Cruas*, piqued, replies he has no desire to marry a *coureuse de nuit*. *Paul* strikes the insolent noble across the face with his glove. Here is an evident copy of the second act of "Marion Delorme"—a provocation and a duel. Even the name of *Marion* herself is introduced in the conversation in very much the same manner as it is in Victor Hugo's drama.

The duel takes place between the acts, and *Paul* wounds or kills *De Cruas*, who is seen no more. The second act has some excellent scenes, though *Mademoiselle Diane*, in her anxious solicitude for her brother, shows rather more knowledge of the sword-exercise than befits the character of a fair and modest young gentlewoman in an age when women had not yet learned to glory in the possession of manly accomplishments. There is something very ridiculous and unseemly in this jargon of the fencing-school issuing from the rosy lips of a true woman.

In the third act of "Diane," as in the third act of "Marion Delorme," we have the presence of the cardinal's right hand —the terrible *M. de Laffemas* using his cunning to worm out the secret of young Paul's retreat—hunting the duelists in both dramas. *M. de Pienne* has concealed the brother of his secretly-beloved *Diane* in a recess of the wall in his own apartment. The sister goes to see *Paul*, and in so doing compromises his life and her own honor, for she is traced to *De Pienne's* hotel by the jealous duchess and the blood-hound *Laffemas*. The duchess attributes the presence of *Diane* to love for *De Pienne;* the astute *chef de police* draws the inference that her brother is concealed there. *Laffemas* threatens to destroy the hotel to the very foundations, and *Diane*, to

save her brother, heroically declares she is *De Pienne's* mistress.

We will not cavil at the forgetfulness of the author, who makes *Paul* complain to *De Pienne*, when they are alone, that he can *hear nothing* in his hiding-place, and then shortly after brings him out of it because he *has* heard the discussion, and will not accept his sister's sacrifice of her good name.

We have now reached the fourth act, in which the comparison between the two dramas is unavoidable from beginning to end. In the one, *Marion* goes to solicit her lover's pardon of the king; in the other, *Diane* craves her brother's of the cardinal minister.

By the way, when *M. de Pienne* says to *Diane*, "This is the king's closet," why should *Diane* question if it is that of the King of France? There is but one king there.

In both dramas the king is in black, the king is sad, the king has the spleen.

*Diane*, from behind a curtain, witnesses a scene between the king and the cardinal. Struck with the greatness of soul, the vast intellect of this sole prop and pillar of a kingdom, she determines to save him from the blow that threatens him. The time appointed by the conspirators is when the cardinal goes on a visit to Monsieur, the king's brother. *Diane* abruptly exclaims, "Go not to Monsieur's!" When *Richelieu* inquires what prompts her to warn him, and why she seeks to save the man who is about to take the life of her young brother, she replies that "she devotes herself to the state." The cardinal insists on knowing the particulars, who? how? when? where? why? Her brother's head is to be the forfeit if she refuses to betray the names of the conspirators. In the end, the minister relents, and grants the young man's pardon without condition; but he is no less determined to find out what he wants to know some other way.

In the fifth act *Paul* marries *Marguerite*. The *Duchess de Rohan*, still jealous of *Diane*, breaks open a will made by *De Pienne* when in danger of losing his head, and finds out what *Diane* herself has hitherto ignored, his love for the latter. Every obstacle is destroyed; the lovers are going to be happy, when the terrible mar-joy, *Laffemas*, comes in and sets all

wrong again. *Diane*, frightened by the black looks of the cardinal's emissary, guesses his errand, and, to save *De Pienne*, declares he is indifferent to her—she does not love him—she'll take her share of life's happiness in the love of her brother's children:

"Je vais être grand mère!"

A lame and impotent conclusion.

Sum total: Very little love-making—very little ambition—no powerful passions—a pale reflection of Victor Hugo's genius.

Mademoiselle Rachel wore a costume designed by Meissonnier with the faithfulness and good taste that distinguishes that painter. But, however elegant her dress, it was not nearly as becoming to the actress as her antique draperies, or even the fanciful and rich dress of the Venetian courtesan, *Tisbé*. Two or three of the passages of this *rôle*, so very unsuited to her style, were spoken with her grand energy and passion, but there was no room for her powers. She was cramped and evidently out of her sphere in this tame, unmeaning framework.

On the 6th of May Mademoiselle Rachel made another unfruitful excursion in the domains of Mademoiselle Mars. She appeared in the great *comédienne's* creation of "Louise de Lignerolles." This drama in five acts, the joint production of Messrs. Prosper Dimaux and Ernest Legouvé, was first brought out in 1838, and was very successful. The revival by Rachel this year was hardly noticed by the press, so complete was her failure.

Her summer *congé* was marked by one of the most brilliant triumphs of her career. She had been invited by the King of Prussia to visit his court, and, although suffering from a painful nervous affection that left her no rest, she resolved to achieve the journey.

It required no less than the determined will, of which Rachel had given so many proofs in conquering fatigue on former occasions, to carry her through on this one. This illness was, with the exception of the one of which she died, the most severe she ever had. Deprived of sleep, of appetite, consumed by a slow fever, troubled with fearful hallucinations, that

brought with them suicidal ideas, she arrived in Brussels completely exhausted. Yet, notwithstanding this prostration of mind and body, she played with even more than her usual animation and fire, sustained by a feverish and dangerous nervous excitement, which imparted a momentary power, for which she paid dearly when the play was over. Great would have been the terror and admiration of the uninitiated spectator, who, after witnessing one of the performances that electrified her audiences, could have seen her, the Circé, but a moment before so powerful, so imperious, so fascinating, now so exhausted, so breathless, so nearly lifeless, carried off in the arms of her maids to the sleepless bed she was to leave but to be brought back to make the same efforts with a like result.

In one of the too numerous letters she either dictated or wrote, Rachel herself mentions this state of over-excitement.

"The public, the foot-lights, Father Corneille, and even my own costume, impart a fictitious strength which enables me to act my part; that done, I am again powerless, and often remain sunk in melancholy until the next performance."

It was under such disheartening circumstances that she gave four performances in Brussels. While there, a circumstance occurred which was to rescue her from this terrible state of suffering. The elder Count Lehon spoke to her in such high terms of a doctor who had effected an extraordinary cure in the case of one of his relatives, that Rachel, though almost hopeless of relief, consented to see him. M. Varlez was a homœopathic physician too, and the *tragédienne* had, on a former occasion, experienced great benefit from the prescription of one of his *confrères*. After a thorough examination of the case, the disciple of Hahnemann undertook the cure, if the invalid would promise the strictest observance of his injunctions. The mode of communication being settled, she continued her journey. A friend who was with her had undertaken to write and forward to M. Varlez daily and circumstantial bulletins of the symptoms and effect of the treatment to which she was subjected. The physician returned minute instructions and prescriptions.

This singular treatment *by post* eventually effected a cure, though the progress toward it was slow. There was even at

Aix-la-Chapelle so severe a crisis, predicted, however, by the doctor, that her life was thought in danger.

The intended journey to Berlin was countermanded, and the *tragédienne* requested to go to Potsdam.

This change in her movements gave rise to the most absurd conjectures; a political mystery was attached to that which had the most simple and natural explanation. The real cause was the shortness of sojourn the Empress of Russia was to make in her brother's dominions, and the state of her majesty's health, which precluded her enduring the fatigue of public *fêtes* and receptions. It had, therefore, been decided that whatever amusement was procured for the illustrious invalid should be enjoyed *en famille* in the retirement of the royal residence.

On the 8th of July Rachel gave her first performance in the new palace of Potsdam, appearing, as usual, in *Camille*.

On her arrival at the palace, whither she had been summoned early, the *tragédienne* found a sumptuous dinner awaiting her. With a view to her honor, it had been arranged that the scenic queen should dine only with such of her *attachés* as she chose to invite, while the secondary personages, the small-fry of confidants, traitors, second-hand heroes, &c., &c., were fed at a separate table. But Rachel had the good taste to say she could not admit of such distinctions, adding that on the eve of a great battle a good general should mess with his soldiers.

As the performance was to take place late in the evening, one of the royal carriages was placed at the *tragédienne's* disposal, and the king's reader accompanied her on an excursion round the chateau of Sans Souci. In the course of the drive she met the Crown Prince and Prince Fréderick of the Netherlands, who were profuse in their compliments.

In the evening, *Camille*, elate with hope and pride, played with all the energy of which she was capable, and was greatly admired. She was presented, by desire of her majesty, to the Empress of Russia, who graciously said, "I have often regretted, mademoiselle, the etiquette that forbids external tokens of approbation; but, had it been otherwise, to-day we could not have applauded, so great was our emotion." The

King of Prussia was equally courteous, and all present seemed greatly pleased.

A few days after, the Emperor Nicholas arrived at Potsdam, where he was to remain but two days, the last of which, the 13th of July, was the birth-day of the empress. The weather being too warm to permit of any enjoyment in *salons* blazing with lights, it was arranged that the little *fête* should take place in the open air, and that the *tragédienne* should there give readings from her chief *rôles* before the imperial and royal families and their suites. The scene chosen was the pretty little Isle of Peacocks. She gave several scenes from "Virginie," and all the second act of "Phèdre," and scenes from "Adrienne Lecouvreur." Her august audience of crowned heads testified enthusiastic approbation. The emperor assured the *tragédienne* that she was greater even than her reputation, and hoped she would give him the pleasure of seeing her next in his own dominions. A hint of this invitation had already been dropped by the empress. It will be seen that the rendezvous was not forgotten on either side.

The Czar, when speaking of the *tragédienne*, was standing before her chair. On her attempting to rise, he remarked that her exertions must have fatigued her, and desired her to remain seated. On her respectfully insisting, he took both her hands and gently held her down, saying, "Remain, mademoiselle, I beg, unless you wish me to retire."

Such kindness and condescension from such quarters was sufficient to turn wiser and steadier heads than that of the young *artiste* whom talent had ennobled. But, in relating the events of this proud day to the member of the press by whom it was intended they should be repeated to the public, Rachel made a remark that was altogether false. She wrote that "never had one person been spoken to by so many emperors, kings, princes, and princesses as she had been." Mademoiselle Rachel, elate with very pardonable vanity, forgot that Talma, Madame Catalani, and other artists of distinguished merit had been treated with equal consideration by many crowned heads. Talma was admitted to the presence of the greatest man that ever wore an imperial tiara, on a footing of familiar intercourse that testified the personal esteem in

which he was held, and which was far more flattering than a few passing compliments.

On the 14th Rachel performed in Potsdam "Phèdre" and "Le Moineau de Lesbie." After the performance the king sent her, by the Comte de Redern, his chamberlain, 20,000 francs, a very munificent present, especially as the large Opera House at Berlin had been granted to her free of expense for six nights, and as she also had all the receipts. The Emperor of Russia sent, through his aid-de-camp, Count Orloffs, substantial tokens of his approbation in the shape of two magnificent opals, surrounded with diamonds, which the recipient immediately estimated at their pecuniary worth at 10,000 francs. Other private persons followed the royal example, and presents and dinners marked each day of her stay.

From Potsdam she resumed her tour, passing through Frankfort, Wiesbaden, Metz, Colmar, and Nancy, playing every where, though unable to stand when off the stage, and traveling from place to place in a bed fitted up in the carriage.

At Strasbourg she suffered another severe crisis, less alarming, however, than that which overtook her in Aix-la-Chapelle. The Princess of Prussia and the Grand-Duchess Stephanie of Baden having invited her to come to them, she conquered indisposition and fatigue in order to reap the advantages compliance would bring. A flattering reception, a magnificent bracelet, and 10,000 francs in gold rewarded the effort. Dr. Varlez had advised she should go to St. Schlangenbad for the sake of the air there, and especially for the solitude and rest of which she was so much in need. She attempted to follow this advice, but, not fancying the place, returned to Brussels, where she actually remained a whole fortnight without leaving the house. She was so much benefited by this forced seclusion and the treatment she pursued that she was enabled to return to Paris on the 18th of August. She immediately repaired to her villa at Montmorency, and there continued for some time the severe regimen prescribed, one of the chief points of which was the most absolute repose of mind and body. When the physician at last permitted her to play, it was only such parts as *Emilie* in "Cinna," *Pauline* in "Polyeucte"—the mildest doses of the Cornelian pharmacopœia.

*Phèdre* and *Camille* were as strictly forbidden as coffee and spices.

The result of this treatment was the entire disappearance of all the fatal symptoms; a new lease of life had been obtained, and her physician has the consciousness of having prolonged this indefatigable *artiste's* existence five years.

In October she was reputed entirely cured, and prepared to undertake new creations. A *rôle* of "Aspasie," a tragedy in two acts by Sanson, was studied by her, but never played; "Rosemonde," which she undertook several years later, was even talked of then.

---

## CHAPTER XXVI.

1853.

"Lady Tartuffe."—Short Summer Excursion.—An obliging Manager.—Engagement in Russia.—Permission of the Emperor, the Minister of State, and the Comédie Français countersigned by M. Legouvé.—A diplomatic Letter.—The Author and the Actress.—Friendly Correspondence.—"Medée" asked for; "Medée" written; "Medée" read; "Medée" revised and corrected; "Medée" approved, received, rehearsed; "Medée" put away for another day.—Mademoiselle Rachel in St. Petersburg.—State of Theatricals in Russia.—A Witty Reply.

Mademoiselle Rachel appeared in the part of Madame de Girardin's "Lady Tartuffe" on the 14th of February, 1853. This proved one of her best creations in comedy, though she herself never fancied the *rôle*.

The heroine is a *Mademoiselle de Blossac*, who, having reached the age of thirty without changing her name, follows the fashion of single ladies, who, in the summer of their existence, feel justified in adopting the title of "Madame." Madame, who leads a retired, respectable life, has met, while on some charitable excursion, the *Duke d'Estigny*, a Marshal of France and ex-embassador, who, fascinated by the lady's apparent virtues, lodges her at once in his house and heart—that is, he begins by the offer of an apartment in his hotel, and ends by that of his hand. In the marshal's hotel there are two other female inmates—his niece, the widowed *Countess de Clairmont*, and her

daughter *Jeanne*, fifteen years old, very pretty, and endowed with a *naïveté*, a simplicity perfectly extraordinary in the present age. Between the widow and the aspirant to the marshal's hand, heart, and titles, there is from the very beginning a feud, which, though at first covert, subdued, and manifested only in asides and little skirmishes—a sort of war in the bush —*guerrilla* encounters, where the blows are none the less deadly because the arm is concealed—ends in an open fight, a pitched battle, in which, though the cause of virtue is apparently triumphant, it is, in fact, hard to tell who has the best of it, and the leaders on both sides are damaged.

The old marshal is a noble-hearted man, prone to place implicit belief in those who have his good opinion, pleased with what looks innocent, good, and affectionate, and with no other failing, even if that may be called one, than the inclination to relate incidents of his military and diplomatic career. The other personages are more or less useful accessories. There is a *Baron de Tourbières*, a sort of factotum of *Madame de Blossac*, who saves her interests in the beginning because she has loaned him 20,000 francs, and who betrays her as soon as he has found one of her enemies willing to lend him that sum to repay her. This person, whose virtue, as he himself tells us, is a marketable commodity—

"O vertu, tu vaux de l'or!"—

is certainly a far more odious creature than *Madame de Blossac;* besides which, he is, in truth, quite a supernumerary in the play, being without importance, interest, or avocation in it. He undertakes to advance her cause with the marshal in the expectation that as *Madame la Maréchal* she will possess sufficient interest to procure him the post of *prefet* or that of *receveur général;* but this busy person does nothing that she could not have accomplished without him, and in the mean while taunts and insults her with impunity because he has a secret of hers which may ruin her reputation.

The lover of *Jeanne*, young *Henri*, is of himself rather an insignificant personage; but, as it happens, he was the intimate friend of a former lover of *Madame de Blossac's*. Five years ago, *Mademoiselle Blossac*, then on a visit to some English mansion, appointed a meeting in a pavilion with her then lover,

who was supposed by the other members of the family to have gone out hunting. The pair was suddenly disturbed by the return of a real hunting party, and in danger of a discovery. The lover, to save the lady's reputation, leaps from the window, and in doing so springs the trigger of his gun. He is severely wounded, but his cold-hearted mistress, anxious to save her good name, heeds not his groans, and leaves him to die without aid. But a fortuitous circumstance reveals to one person at least her presence in the pavilion, where she had dropped her bouquet of heather. Since that fatal day she is yearly reminded of it by the *envoi*, on its anniversary, of a bouquet of heather sent by an unknown hand.

There is an excellent scene in the first act; unfortunately, it is but too faithful a representation of that which is daily passing in society, where reputations are slain with the most inoffensive-looking weapons. Several members of a charitable society are assembled in *Madame de Blossac's salon* to discuss ways and means for the advancement of the interests of that society. The praise of the hostess, her piety and charity, form the chief theme of conversation until the entrance of the *Countess de Clairmont* and her daughter. The countess says at once she is not brought there by her own will. She comes deputed by her uncle to announce her daughter's marriage, and invite *Madame de Blossac* to join the family, who are that evening to celebrate the betrothals in the apartments of the marshal. Here *Madame de Blossac* learns that the intended husband is *Henri de Rennevelle*, the man whom for five years she has secretly but passionately loved. The shock is terrible. She seeks to avert it by preventing the marriage, and resorts for that purpose to the usual feminine weapon, calumny. The scene is terribly true to the life.

The poisoned arrow has sped to its destination. *Monsieur de St. Yrieux*, one of the persons present, is a friend of the *Rennevelle* family; he thinks it a duty to warn them of the stain on *Jeanne's* character, and the result may be anticipated. This first act is very skillfully written; the dialogue is lively and witty; the characters are well drawn; the scene of the slander, so delicately insinuated, is particularly good.

The second and third acts are taken up with the sad conse-

quences of the evil reports on poor little *Jeanne*. The scene where the amours between *Madame de Blossac* and the marshal are carried on, and in which the lady makes considerable progress toward the accomplishment of her aim—that of the open rupture between the countess and her foe, during which the former exhibits a violence that contrasts with the mild dignity of her subtle antagonist, are well written, full of animation and interest. *Madame de Blossac* is warmly supported by the enamored old marshal, who closes his doors on his relatives, and announces his marriage with their *victim*.

In the fourth act we have the vindication of *Jeanne*. But it does not suffice that she be proved pure in the eyes of the family circle; she must be so in the eyes of the public, and that is a far more difficult matter. *Henri*, who has recognized in the common foe the *Madame de Blossac* whose egotism caused the death of his friend, and to whom he yearly sends the fatal reminder, lays a plot to dishonor her in the opinion of the world—not a very delicate proceeding on the part of this honest young man; but the tables are on the point of being turned upon him. He appoints a rendezvous at his own rooms, Hotel Wagram, to hear her promised communication. The lady gives him the history of her long-concealed love for him, a love anterior to her intrigue with his friend; his indifference maddened and drove her to endeavor, by flirting with another, to forget him. The narrative of this pure affection watching over him so many years with untiring solicitude, the fascination of the siren's voice, the magic charm of her eye, her frank avowal of former errors, her resolve to live another life, to be what she has hitherto affected only, and that for his sake, her disinterestedness—for she asks no return—all these have their effect, and cause the young man to reflect on the meanness of his own conduct in drawing a woman into an ambush. He is on the point of endeavoring to disentangle her from the net he himself had cast around her, when the countess, the marshal, and the *Baron des Tourbières*, whom he had concealed in an adjoining room to witness her defeat, break in and seek—two of them, at least—to shame her.

The scene between *Henri* and *Madame de Blossac* is forced and unnatural. Never would a clever woman, such as she is

described, play such a part or run such a risk. But the closing scene is excellent; the disgraced, betrayed, and foiled woman is so energetic, so true to herself, so courageous amid the wreck of her long-cherished hopes, that it is hard to tell on which side the victory lies—the marshal's last words—

"Poor woman, they are all against her!"—

clearly evince that over him, at least, *Madame de Blossac* will soon regain her empire. As for the main point sought by the conspirators against *Madame de Blossac*—the rehabilitation of *Jeanne* in the opinion of the public—we can not see but what it is as far off as ever. *Jeanne* herself comes in all alone at the end of the play, exclaiming that she has been seeking her mother every where. Her presence was needed for the *tableau finale*, the joining of the lovers' hands and the blessing asked by *De Tourbières*, but it does seem rather strange that she should leave her home unattended to seek her mother in *Henri's* apartment, Hotel Wagram!

It has been said, and with great truth, that a dramatic work is the greatest of all literary efforts. It is rare, indeed, that a play is written that combines every requisite. When the chief character is powerfully drawn, the other personages are weak and faulty. At times, every thing is sacrificed to a few scenes, rendered effective by the most improbable absurdities; at others, brilliancy of style and superabundance of detail, like regal garments thrown over a skeleton, merely serve to conceal the poverty of the idea and the meagreness of the subject. For one or two successful and really good plays that now and then surprise the public, how innumerable are the failures!

Madame de Girardin, when she attempted tragedy, mistook her vocation, as "Judith" and "Cléopâtre" amply testified. But in "Lady Tartuffe" and "La Joie Fait Peur" she proved herself possessed of all the elements required to excel as a writer of comedy—of the real French comedy, the honor of inventing which reverts to La Chaussée.

If comedy be, indeed, the representation of the incidents and habits of familiar life, Molière himself overlooked a portion of its domain.

The poet calls human nature a "pendulum between a smile and a tear," and this is the true view that comedy must take; this was the view taken of it by La Chaussée: to have enlarged or cultivated the tract he opened is a glorious progress. At the present day we may well wonder that he who first embodied this appreciation of life should have been sneered at.

To the old detractors of La Chaussée Madame de Girardin opposed the triumphant reputation of her talent—an indisputable authority. She was well aware that smiles and tears were the two poles of the human heart, at times brought together by a violent shock, and in "La Joie Fait Peur" she chose the subject most susceptible of being put upon the stage. We often hear the phrase of "to laugh until you cry," and there is no sadder species of insanity than that produced by extreme grief, and which betrays itself by violent fits of laughter. What was peculiarly her own, that which specially constituted Madame de Girardin's originality, was the skillful manner in which she effected a transition between those two extremes of feeling. She was well acquainted with the chords of the instrument, and succeeded in charming her readers or her audience without agitating them with too violent an emotion, or giving too great a shock to the nervous system.

"Lady Tartuffe" was not, perhaps, as pleasing or as correct a work as "La Joie Fait Peur." The author was progressing in a department of dramatic art in which she would have reached perfection had her life been spared, and "Lady Tartuffe" was younger by a year than her more successful play. It betokens too hurried an execution. The plot is, perhaps, too intricate; there is much to be pruned—much that needed more delicate a finish. Some of the speeches are too long, and weary the audience; while the result, which has been laboriously sought among a crowd of incidents, proves unsatisfactory. Still, with all its faults, "Lady Tartuffe" is a type belonging to the authoress, and which, had she remodeled it, would have proved an excellent comedy.

The worst fault of this play was its title, a title plainly indicating the intention of the author, but one as mistaken as it was bold, for it is in no way justified by the heroine. It is the flourish of trumpets announcing the entrance into the lists

with Molière of a new candidate—an attempt to compete where competition was sure to entail failure—to imitate where any imitation must prove a caricature. Beaumarchais himself committed this mistake when he allowed the "New Tartuffe" to appear on the playbills; but even this daring genius disavowed his presumptuous pretensions, and changed the title to that of the "Guilty Mother."

As for a *female Tartuffe*, thank heaven no such being ever existed. Molière's demon is a complete fiend, without a single redeeming point, and such a one could never find a lodging in a female heart. In the "Lady Tartuffe" of Madame de Girardin there are flashes of repentance—there is love. In the "Tartuffe" of Molière there could be neither. Repentance of itself washes away much sin, and where real love exists for a worthy object it regenerates the most erring nature: *Madame de Blossac* herself tell us so. *Tartuffe* never felt one moment's repentance, and the passion *Elimire* had excited in him deserves quite another name than that of love.

Mademoiselle Rachel made a conscientious study of this *rôle*, and though, as we have several times had occasion to remark, very inferior in comedy to what she was in her own *repertoire*, she played the character in the most creditable manner. This was the more meritorious, as she disliked the part exceedingly. The *finesse*, the covert, subtle, subdued style required to play the female hypocrite, were the opposites of the grand, bold, daring passions of tragedy, and could not be natural in Mademoiselle Rachel. What added greatly to the attraction was that Sanson, her professor, took the part of the old marshal, and their perfect understanding, long habit of studying together, and knowledge of each other's powers produced a result nearly amounting to perfection.

Still, though she played it well, and the play found favor with the public, the first night had well-nigh proved fatal to it. The authoress, indeed, was so greatly disappointed that she wished to leave the theatre without speaking to Mademoiselle Rachel, under pretense of emotion. M. Regnier endeavored to persuade her to the contrary, but for some little time his efforts were vain. "No," exclaimed the vexed authoress, "I can not see her; she has played wretchedly!"

Finally, she allowed herself to be conducted to the *artiste's* dressing-room, and a few cold words were exchanged.

"You are not pleased," said Rachel.

"*N'importe*, with you I am sure to succeed," replied Madame de Girardin.

This year it was announced by Mademoiselle Rachel that she intended to devote the summer *congé* to repose, in order to be able, with recruited strength and energy, to perform the duties of her autumnal and winter season. She intended this, it was said, as a refutation of the charges that had been brought against her by the management at the time of the lawsuit with the Théâtre Français.

It might be that she needed rest, for during the spring season, while she was acting *Lady Tartuffe* at the Théâtre Français, she was playing on the off nights in the Departments. Thus, during the whole of March, she spent her days in the railways, and nights acting in Amiens, Orleans, Tours, going even as far as Nantes, and yet performing twice a week in Paris! She called this resting, because she was not permanently away from the capital. She was charmed by M. Arsène Houssaye's compliance with her wishes regarding these excursions.

"C'est il gentil de M. Houssaye de me laisser faire cela, car il pourrait me le defendre!" she would exclaim, in the exuberance of her gratitude.

She did not, indeed, prolong her summer *congé* abroad over six weeks, during which she played in London, Brussels, Angers, Liège, and Saumur. Contrary to her expectations, she had no houses. This was probably owing to her having visited these towns too often, and the provinces can not bear repeated drains like capitals constantly recruited by foreign visitors. At all events, Rachel, as was her wont when she wished to hide her disappointment, feigned sudden illness and returned to Paris, though she was expected in La Haye. It was then she announced her intention to repose during the remainder of the *congé*. How far she was sincere in her resolve to recruit for the benefit of the Théâtre Français will appear by the use she made of her renewed strength. The summer was spent in active negotiations to obtain a most

lucrative engagement that had long been anxiously desired by Mademoiselle Rachel, and which was finally obtained at the expense of the Théâtre Français.

It must be owned that, though not over scrupulous as to the means she used, the great *tragédienne* possessed a quality for which *artistes* are not often distinguished—she was an excellent woman for business. She never lost sight of what to her was the main point.

In the beginning of September it was rumored that she was going to spend the winter in Russia. St. Petersburg had not yet paid the tribute of gold and laurels she had obtained in almost every European capital. Rachel reflected that she had no time to lose if she wished to levy her tax. The Eastern question was becoming so complicated that a war was inevitable, and hostilities were expected to break out in the spring. If she delayed, the rubles were lost to her. All the wires of dramatic diplomacy were set to work; the Russian court was willing to pass the winter as agreeably as possible previous to commencing a campaign of which it entertained such brilliant anticipations, and an engagement for six months was offered to Mademoiselle Rachel, who was permitted by the courtesy of the French government to accept it.

This important news was communicated in the following terms to M. Ernest Legouvé, one of the authors of "Adrienne Lecouvreur," by Madame de Saigneville, a friend of the *tragédienne*, and her secretary whenever a difficult negotiation was to be carried through:

"October 5th.

"You have probably learned, sir, by the newspapers, the incredible munificence of the engagement proposed to our Rachel in the name of the Emperor of Russia. Government has thought fit to permit the great *artiste* to earn in six months a fortune. Rachel will be back here on the 15th of May (1854). She will, on her arrival, be quite perfect in "Medea," and the tragedy will be acted immediately. I send you herewith her letter, properly dated. She commissioned me to forward it as a proof of her good intentions.

"I need not say how devotedly I am yours,

"L. J. DE SAIGNEVILLE."

The above letter was corroborated by one from Mademoiselle Rachel herself, written in the coaxing, insinuating tone women command so readily when they wish to obtain any thing.

"DEAR M. LEGOUVÉ,—Brilliant offers have long been made to induce me to spend a winter in Russia. These I have refused, alleging my duties at the Théâtre Français and the fear of disobliging my comrades. But the engagement now offered is really so extraordinarily advantageous that I have endeavored to obtain the very great favor of taking this winter the six months' *congé* I was to have next summer. The Emperor, the Minister of State, and the Comédie Française have granted me leave to visit that northern nation. I set out with sufficient courage, and I assure you it is needed to brave the approaching season, which threatens to be severe. Do not, dear sir, increase my grief (which is great) by bearing me any ill-will. I shall keep "Medea." I would greatly wish to find her on my return the spotless maiden she now is; but, whatever happens to her, my love is such I will willingly receive her back from the arms she may have wandered into.

"You have sometimes professed yourself my friend; here, now, is an excellent opportunity of proving yourself one. I hope, on my return, to find your friendship unaltered.

"As for me, I am ever your devoted RACHEL.

"Paris, October 4th, 1853."

The reader who has forgotten, or perhaps heard of the suit at law between M. Legouvé and Mademoiselle Rachel toward the close of the year 1854, will perhaps question why the proud *Roxane*, the fierce *Hermione*, should write so coaxingly to M. Legouvé, and why she, who had a pass signed by the Emperor, the Minister of State, and the Comédie Française, deemed it requisite that it should be countersigned by that gentleman. A few words will explain her anxiety on this point, and throw some preliminary light on the subsequent quarrel.

M. Legouvé, the son of a poet, a poet himself of some reputation, and one of the authors of "Adrienne Lecouvreur," had become the friend of Mademoiselle Rachel under the fol-

lowing circumstances. *Adrienne* was first offered to Mademoiselle Rachel, who, after learning and rehearsing the part, suddenly took it into her head that it was quite unsuited to her. This caprice, for we have already seen that she had neither taste nor discernment in dramatic literature, offended M. Scribe exceedingly, and he gave the charming *rôle* to Mademoiselle Rose Cheri. The spirit of rivalry did what no entreaties or the promptings of good sense could have obtained. Rachel was as eager to have the part when it was another's as she had been obstinate in returning it when it was hers. But M. Scribe was also a sovereign power in theatrical affairs. He was in his turn obdurate, and it was only through the kindly intervention of his co-author, M. Legouvé, that the coveted part went back to its original destination.

The success of the play having taught Mademoiselle Rachel how much she was indebted to him who had restored it to her, became the foundation of the warmest friendship between them. The actress, with that passionate enthusiasm of heart and head which is too often the sole guide of the sex, could neither see nor hear save through her *cher auteur*. She would have wished to play no works but his, and, until he could write new ones for her, she took up his old ones.

Mademoiselle Mars had some years before created with the fullest success the *rôle* of *Louise de Lignerolles*. We have seen that Mademoiselle Rachel, who ought to have been taught wisdom by former failures, undertook once more to prove her right of succession to the light sceptre so gracefully held by the great *comédienne;* but the attempt was extremely unfortunate. That her good-will was not lacking is fully shown by the following lines, written on the fly-leaf of a copy of "Talma's Memoirs" sent to M. Legouvé on the 6th of January, 1852.

"I mean to spend my nights learning 'Louise de Lignerolles,' with which I am exceedingly charmed. See M. Houssaye as soon as possible, that the work may be immediately revived. You may rely on my zeal, my devotion, and somewhat, too, on my ability. I send you a book, the perusal of which will, I think, interest you. You have promised me a play for 1853; I rely on having it, mind. RACHEL."

Monsieur Legouvé was justified in considering so positive an invitation, as it were, in the presence of the shade of Talma, as a formal command, binding on both sides. He set to work, choosing "Medea" as his subject.

The subject was not a new one; but neither had his predecessors, who wrote expressly for Mademoiselle Rachel, selected very modern themes. The "Lucrèce" of M. Ponsard and the "Virginie" of M. Latour de St. Ybars, the two tragedies of contemporaries in which she had been most happy, were both based on incidents borrowed from the early legends of the Roman republic. The character of *Medea* was, perhaps, more appropriate than either of the former to bring into bold relief the peculiar qualities and style of the actress. She had, moreover, expressed a wish that the play should be short, and that all the interest should be concentrated in her part. The tragedy was accordingly in three acts only, during which the fierce princess was almost constantly on the stage. In these two points, at least, Mademoiselle Rachel's views were fully carried out.

"Medée" was finished in April of that year (1852), and Mademoiselle Rachel, who had been forthwith apprised of the fact, promptly replied to the communication by the following grateful and friendly letter:

"Mon cher Auteur,—I am exceedingly desirous of hearing your new work. I am yet rather ailing, not having quite recovered from an indisposition I suffered from in Belgium last month; but having had the courage to submit to the most absolute inaction during all this month, I am inclined to think there is still life in me, and especially strength enough to be indebted to you for new triumphs. I am at present residing at Montmorency, where, if you please, I will hear the play that is to be our next winter's success. The 8th of September would suit me well; the hour I leave to you, as I am always at home. I would wish the part to be a brilliant one, but not fatiguing, since, unfortunately, I shall not for some months be able to play my grand *repertoire*, that is, 'Phèdre,' 'Horaces,' 'Louise de Lignerolles,' 'Marie Stuart,' 'Andromaque,' &c., &c. That shows you I am not very strong yet.

I am in hopes the reading of your play will accelerate my recovery. I shall owe you much; rely on it, then, that I will be doubly grateful. RACHEL.

"Montmorency, August 27th."

The private reading alluded to in the above letter was followed by the official one before the *comité de lecture* of the theatre, and it was received conditionally—that is, there were six white and six red balls. The explanation of this was that two acts were unanimously received, and one on condition of certain alterations, to which the author consented. The third act having been remoulded, the play was submitted to an ordeal considered by authors as almost equivalent to a public performance—it was read in the presence of an audience consisting of the *élite* of literature and of society. Among the men of the world, of letters, and of that of fashion assembled in Mademoiselle Rachel's *salon* were Messrs. Charton, H. Martin, J. Janin, Briffault, Rolle, De Noailles, Berlioz, &c., by whom "Medée" was received with great applause, the hostess herself manifesting the most enthusiastic admiration.

This time the admission by the *comité de lecture* of the theatre was unanimous and unconditional, and Mademoiselle Rachel was rehearsing her part diligently, when, in September of 1853, the voyage to Russia was resolved upon.

It is evident that it was rather a delicate matter to propose to an author, who had been laboring for two years for her and at her request, the adjournment of all his hopes at the moment they were about to be realized. Hence the coaxing tone of the letters of Mademoiselle Rachel and her secretary, Mademoiselle de Saigneville.

M. Legouvé, however, did not justify the charge made against authors belonging to the genus irritable. He consented with a good grace to the proposed delay; and, free from all obstacles, Mademoiselle Rachel set out for Russia in the month of October of this year.

A few words on the present state of theatricals in the capital of Russia will be a sufficient protest against the assertions of those who deem it no difficult matter to earn distinction in what they imagine to be a city where dramatic art is still in its infancy.

St. Petersburg possesses four theatres and six theatrical companies.

The houses are:

The Grand Théâtre, where the Italian Opera and ballets are given.

The Russian Theatre, or Thèâtre Alexandre, for the performance of works in the national language: by a singular anomaly, this house is the one that attracts the fewest spectators.

The French Theatre, or Théâtre Mikaëlski, exclusively appropriated to French companies.

The Théâtre Cirque, so called from its having been originally built for the performance of the Imperial Equestrian Company. At present the Russian Opera Company and German Dramatic Company perform there alternately.

The Grand Théâtre and the Théâtre Français are the best patronized in St. Petersburg. The court, the citizens, and the numerous French inhabitants are supporters of these two houses. The German performances at the Théâtre du Cirque attract only the German residents. As to the Russian dramatic and operatic performances, they are left entirely to the lower classes, who do not exhibit any very ardent patriotism in their support. The Russians seem to feel already that, to take their place worthily in the ranks of civilized nations, they must renounce in an artistic and literary sense the use of their language.

The two Russian theatres are in their infancy, but not in such infancy as was that of Western theatricals when they were compelled to struggle against barbarism, and to seek their models in the dust of ages and in the scattered fragments of forgotten antiquity. The pieces brought out in those theatres gave evidence of the contemporary education their authors have received and of the atmosphere in which they have dwelt. There is more than one Russian dramatic work on a level with the present century, and which, translated into French or English, would take its place among those most in vogue in London or Paris. The same may be said of the actors. They are not grossly ignorant companions of Thespis, fit only to perform in silly shows for the amusement of spec-

tators neither wiser nor more refined than themselves. They have been formed in the schools of their French, German, and Italian comrades, and have been early initiated in all the rules of art, in all the mysteries of the profession. There are several among them who can bear comparison with the most celebrated of the members of the French troop.

Such was the dramatic world in which Mademoiselle Rachel made her appearance in St. Petersburg.

The reception of the *tragédienne* in St. Petersburg was not only most gratifying to her vanity, but also most encouraging as to her success. Strange to say, however, no experience or long practice, no confidence in the favorable disposition toward her of the audience, could make her conquer the timidity with which she is seized when about to appear either in a new part or before a new public. For some days before the ordeal she was always in a state of great nervous excitement, fidgety, irritable, and fault-finding to the last degree. This state of mind is so inseparable to a *début* that the event is as much dreaded by those about her as by herself. Poor Rose, her faithful maid, is most especially delighted when the event is over, and her mistress has again recovered her usual placidity of temper. When she comes on the stage on these occasions her hands are icy cold, the drops of perspiration cover her brow, her voice is husky, her limbs are so tremulous she can scarcely stand. This emotion, which, in one so skilled and practiced to appear before the foot-lights, is extraordinary, is reproduced, more or less violently, every time she plays in a character which the public has not seen her in, though she may have acted it with applause scores of times elsewhere.

When, therefore, she appeared before the court of St. Petersburg in "Phèdre," she did not justify her reputation on the first night. It was not encouragement that was lacking, and it was given, too, most liberally, at most unexpected moments. For instance, when *Phèdre* utters the passage ending with these lines,

> "Détestable flatteurs présent le plus funeste,
> Que puisse faire aux rois le colère celeste!"

the signal for loud applause came from the imperial box, and was too enthusiastic and prolonged for the intention to be

mistaken. It was called forth as much by the allusion the lines contained as by the talent of the actress who uttered them.

In "Lady Tartuffe" the emotion of Mademoiselle Rachel was such that it was thought by those on the stage and behind the scenes she would not be able to proceed with the part. In the scene of the fifth act, when *Henri* reveals himself by throwing the bouquet of heather to her whom he accuses of causing his friend's death, it was fortunate that the part required a show of emotion, which this time was not feigned. It was in vain the prompter gave her the cue; she had completely lost her memory, and could only whisper to him who played *Henri*, "Oh, I can not—can not go on!" ("Je n'en puis plus.") The nature of the passage giving her time to recover, she finally shook off the feeling.

The French company remained at the Mikaëlski theatre fourteen weeks, during which time Rachel played every other day. The favorite play with the Russian public seemed to be "Adrienne Lecouvreur," and it was accordingly given oftener than any other.

The imperial approbation showed itself in a tangible form as well as in empty compliments and evanescent applause. The *tragédienne* was presented by the empress with a pelisse of the most costly furs in the world, and by the munificent Nicholas with a diamond and ruby corsage ornament of great value. Raphael Felix had his share of the spoils in the shape of a magnificent ring. There was an idle report among the actors that a handsome sum had been sent to be distributed among the other members of the company, but Raphael undeceived them; the money had been sent as the price of the boxes taken by the court.

From St. Petersburg Rachel went to Moscow, where she played six weeks. The company was to have played in Warsaw, but counter-orders were given by the government.

The success of Mademoiselle Rachel was not alone due to her as an actress; she made innumerable conquests over the hearts of the young boyards, and the gallant officers, who joyously anticipated nothing less than a second invasion of France, appeared proud to wear the chains of her celebrated daughter.

Among the numerous unauthenticated anecdotes that circulated with regard to her sayings and doings during her stay in the Czar's domains, we venture to present the following to our readers, by many of whom it may have already been seen, as it has appeared in print. We give it, not on account of its being more worthy of belief, but because, if true, it does credit to Rachel; if not, she had ready wit enough to have made the reply, though her *patriotism* would never have suggested it.

A dinner had been offered to the French Melpomene, and the young military guests were speaking of the possibility that the sword might be called to sever the Gordian knot that diplomacy seemed to despair of ever loosening.

"We shall not bid you adieu, but *au revoir*, mademoiselle," quoth one of the gay sons of Mars to the *tragédienne;* "we hope soon to applaud you in the capital of France, and to drink your health in its excellent wines."

"Nay, messieurs," replied she, "France will not be rich enough to afford Champagne to all her prisoners."

## CHAPTER XXVII.

1854.

Return from Russia.—Prudence *versus* Patriotism.—M. Legouvé loses Patience.—A Declaration of War before the Civil Tribunal.—Soft Words.—M. Legouvé appeased.—The Spoiled Pet and the Public.—Another Quarrel patched up.—Mademoiselle Rachel in the Classic *Repertoire* at the close of her Career.—"Phèdre."—"Camille."—A *Souvenir* of the Past.

It was said that the harvest Mademoiselle Rachel reaped in Russia amounted to 300,000 francs for her own share, and that Raphael's modest gains as manager of the company gave a total of 100,000 francs. A very handsome reward for making what, under the circumstances, might be considered a pleasure trip!

But the hour had arrived when Russian hearts were to be left to break, or seek comfort elsewhere. As to that of the fortunate daughter of Israel, it found satisfactory compensation in the rubles she bore away. She might say with truth, "C'est autant de prisur l'ennemi!"

Political events marched on apace, and left no time to deliberate; the war was imminent. It was said that the Czar had one moment entertained the idea of detaining Mademoiselle as a willing hostess, but that she had refused to remain. In fact, there was no longer any inducement. If she staid after the close of her engagement she had to do so on her own account, and the chances were against her in that case. The majority of the fashionable aristocracy having a knowledge of the language could appreciate her acting, but many would be called away to join the army. Of the gentry, some went to see her merely because it was the fashion to do so, and, the novelty once over, never cared to go again. It was not in St. Petersburg as in Paris, where the *bourgeoisie* are among the stanch supporters of the stage, and even the lower class delight in theatricals, and contribute gladly their quota to support them. The Russian tradespeople could find no charms in Racine and Corneille, and the inferior ranks were not to be counted at all.

All these considerations aroused the dormant patriotism of the *tragédienne*, and she hurried home when she could get nothing by staying any longer. She was, perhaps, the last Frenchwoman that crossed the frontier.

During her stay in the Czar's dominions Mademoiselle Rachel had continually heard her Russian friends boast of what they should, could, and would do. The invasion of 1814 and 1815 were to find their parallels in 1854. These vain braggings probably had their effect on the prudent actress, and made her resolve to quit, for a time, a country that was likely to be impoverished, if not ruined, by the invader. She might, in the mean while, seek in America another El Dorado. Time was money, and she could not lose hers.

She did not even await her arrival in Paris to carry out her plans, but began their execution before she left Russia.

That the American excursion was planned at that time there is every reason to believe. Why else should Rachel have thought fit, immediately on her arrival in France, to repay the courtesy and kindness with which the Emperor, the Minister of State, and the Comédie Française had permitted her to visit that northern nation, by sending in her resigna-

tion? Why else should she have deputed her mother to signify to M. Legouvé that "decidedly she would not play Medée," the Medée which Mademoiselle de Saigneville had announced "should be played immediately on her return from Russia," and which Mademoiselle Rachel was so afraid she would not find "the same pure maiden," though her love was such she was "willing to take her from the arms she might have strayed into."

We know not how the French government received the announcement of the resignation, but the revelations of the Palais de Justice have placed before us the rather sharp answer returned by M. Legouvé to the intimation forwarded to him of Mademoiselle Rachel's resolutions with regard to "Medée."

"DEAR LADY," wrote the poet, "I have had the honor to see madame, your mother; she communicated to me the contents of your letter. I replied as I reply to you now—that it is impossible you should not play 'Medée.' Of this I will easily convince you on your return. I shall be delighted to have afforded you the opportunity of a new triumph, even a little against your will.

"Yours, very truly, E. LEGOUVÉ."

This firm but courteous letter met Mademoiselle Rachel in Warsaw on her way back. Her reply, dated March 14th, was as follows:

"MY DEAR M. LEGOUVÉ,—Your letter reached me on my arrival in Warsaw; I hasten to answer it, for I would not be the cause of delaying any longer the success that awaits "Medée" at the Théâtre Français.

"My resignation is most serious; consequently, I have but six months to give to the Théâtre Français. I wish in that time to play all my classic *repertoire;* this I could not do if I undertook a new creation at present. I will even confess that I ought not to create a new *rôle* when I am on the eve of quitting the French stage. The conviction that the press would not support me, fear would paralyze my faculties, and it is not at the close of my career in the Rue de Richelieu that I would like to risk seventeen years of success in Paris.

"Pray believe, dear M. Legouvé, that I am truly grieved to find I must give up the playing of 'Medée.'

"Very much your friend, RACHEL."

No sort of doubt could remain, and M. Legouvé—the courteous, peace-seeking M. Legouvé—was obliged to seek the redress the law alone could give him. Mademoiselle Rachel reached Paris on the 27th of March; on the 30th she was legally notified to play *Medée*. This first step having been taken no notice of, a petition to be allowed to summon the rebellious actress herself was presented on the 1st of April to the President of the Civil Tribunal of the Seine, and forthwith granted.

Mademoiselle Rachel knew well with whom she had to deal, and, convinced that these fierce demonstrations emanated not from him, but from his lawyer, she wrote him a letter that would have disarmed a man of sterner mould than the son of the soft-hearted author of "De Mérite des Femmes."

"I am about to start for the Pyrenees to meet my sister Rebecca, who is there extremely ill, to take one of my children there, whose state of health alarms me greatly, and to seek myself the rest which has been prescribed to me. I leave here on account of all these very strong motives, of which you are not ignorant, but I can not absent myself from Paris without coming to some decision on the subject of the lawsuit you have commenced against me—you, whom I called, and whom I still call, my dear Monsieur Legouvé.

"I am only here, on my way through Paris, a prey to the most harrowing anxiety, and I receive, one after another, two horrid bits of stamped paper instead of the interview of ten minutes, which, as you wrote me in Warsaw, was to set matters right between us, and which certainly would have done so had you consulted your memory instead of the retailers of chicanery.

"Must I imitate you? I ask myself this question between two half-packed trunks, but I hesitate but a second. No, I will not play *Medée* under judicial compulsion, with the risk, if the guilty, the abominable 'Medée' does not meet with the

success the author expects, of hearing myself accused by his friends as the cause. People of the world and of the press will not fail to say that, if 'Medée' did not succeed, it was the fault of Mademoiselle Rachel, who retaliated by opposing ill-will to compulsion, and revenged herself on the author by killing the piece.

"'*Medée*' may murder her children, she may even poison her worthy father-in-law; I can not do the same, even if I would.

"The public must not be taken for an accomplice to avenge theatrical quarrels when one bears such a name as mine, and when one has for it the respect I have.

"Consequently, my dear M. Legouvé, I will show in this petty war more moderation than you, although the epoch when I shall irrevocably cease to belong to the Théâtre Français is very nigh; although I can now give but a very few performances, which, out of gratitude, must be from my classic *repertoire*, when every thing proves that I shall not have time in case of possible failure to seek to retrieve it, I will not have a lawsuit. You will have me play *Medée* under these circumstances? Well, I will do so. I will even endeavor to forget your summonses, your stamped paper, messages, and *huissiers*' visit. I will forget all my griefs, and only remember the success for which we have been reciprocally indebted to each other, and the friendship you have been so ready to break.

"At the expiration of my *congé* I will undertake *Medée*. You have merit enough to afford to be modest, but you are certainly too modest when you deem me indispensable to your work.

"Meanwhile, until I can call myself your devoted *Medée*, I still sign myself your entirely devoted RACHEL.

"Paris, April 9th, 1854."

This time the motives alleged by Mademoiselle Rachel for her absence and for the delay she again begged were but too well founded. The state of Rebecca's health was most alarming. M. Legouvé is a poet, but, above all, he is a man hereditarily devoted to the worship and companionship of wom-

an. The most sensitive chords of his heart had been artfully touched—he was disarmed—the suit was not prosecuted: he waited.

The *congé*, however, at length expired, and Mademoiselle Rachel made her reappearance in "Phèdre" on the 30th of May.

Never, perhaps, had the absence of that personal sympathy which had always been lacking between Mademoiselle Rachel and the *parterre* of the Théâtre Français been manifested so plainly as on the evening of this *rentrée*. Many were the sins accumulated on that head. The remembrance of her conduct toward the committee of the theatre and the legal debates to which it had given rise were fresh in every mind. The Comédie Français is a sort of holy ark with the Parisians. But that which had added gall to the cup was her subsequent anti-patriotic *fugue* to Russia—a country that had left such painful *souvenirs* in the capital—*souvenirs* that had then not as yet been effaced by the glorious exploits of the French army in the Crimea—a country that boasted of renewing the days of shame and humiliation of 1814! On the eve of a bloody war, Rachel had hastened to contribute her talent to the entertainment of the enemy. The reception of the capricious, *nomade*, grasping renegade was in accordance with the thoughts that filled every mind. It was silent—cold as the tomb: every brow was stern, every eye severe.

But the more implacable and resolute seemed the audience in its indignation, the more determined was the actress to conquer and bring it back, if not to love, at least to passionate admiration. And she succeeded; for, we have already said it, with her, will was power.

Now that this, the greatest French tragic actress that has appeared for many years, and who, perhaps, will have no worthy successor for several generations, is in all likelihood really excluded forever from that stage she so frequently threatened to forsake, a few words on the manner in which she performed, at the close of her career, the plays of her classic *repertoire*, are due to her.*

* The reader will bear in mind that the greater portion of this work was written before the death of Mademoiselle Rachel.

When Mademoiselle Rachel first won the enthusiastic admiration of the public, she was immediately called *la grande tragédienne*. Yet at that time she only gave promise of what she would be; the signs were indeed extraordinary, and she fully justified afterward the expectations she had raised and the title she had obtained. But it was not at once that, in every *rôle*, she deserved the extravagant encomiums lavished upon her first steps; there were some in which only transient rays pierced at intervals through the darkness. It was not until some years had elapsed that the radiant sun burst forth in all its splendor.

The one in which her excellence was most evidently progressive was "Phèdre." It was not until her return from Russia, when her talent was in its maturity, that she fully realized this superhuman conception of the poet.

It was remarked that she had brought back from her distant excursion the art she either had not before, or had never deemed necessary—the art of pantomime. When, in France, Rachel had uttered in her deep, clear, sonorous tones the poetry of Corneille and Racine, the poets were sufficient in themselves; they were at home, and loved and appreciated; the public knew the text, and needed no paraphrase. But the priestess had borne her gods into an unknown region, established their altars in an unconsecrated temple, amid unbelieving nations; the pythoness spoke a strange tongue; the melody of those eloquent oracles fell into sealed ears, and the human passions to which she gave a voice were mute to those deaf spectators. Something that appealed to the eye was wanting there, and the intelligent interpreter supplied it. And when she brought back this new faculty, even those who had never found it lacking exulted in the acquisition, and the detractors, who would formerly only acknowledge she was a splendid reader, dared no longer thus qualify their praise.

The character played was now not in the voice and look only of the actress, but in her whole being. The voice of the actor has but a limited part to play in the event. When he ceases to speak the interest is transferred to the next speaker, and so on from one to the other of the *dramatis personæ*. With Rachel the case stood wholly differ-

ent. She concentrated the tragedy on herself. She embodied the event—began and developed it—foreshadowed the end. She incarnated the character, the action. When she appeared as *Phèdre*, bending under the weight of the diadem that burned that brow like a fiery circle, shrinking from the veils that enrobed her, she was the type of suffering, the living image of Destiny's victim; her curse and her crime are present throughout the play.

It was more especially in the death-scene that Rachel typified with mute, thrilling eloquence the Greek victim. The agony, so calm, so proud, so dignified, is truly that of the God-descended queen, who disdains to betray the mortal pangs that rack her terrestrial nature. Pantomime is not only almost impossible to describe, but is also one of the most difficult things to imitate. It might perhaps be very dangerous for any one else to attempt the reproduction of gestures unless they conveyed as vividly the terrific idea.

It was not till after fifteen years had elapsed that Rachel rose to *Phèdre*, and presented that extraordinary combination of pagan passion and Christian remorse, where Euripides appears to have inspired Racine, and to which an Athenian audience of his day would have listened with as great delight and surprise as the enthusiastic Parisians of the nineteenth century.

It need scarcely be added that the fascinating actress cemented anew her empire, and was recalled with deafening applause.

On the 6th of June, the celebration of the anniversary of Corneille's birth-day, the inauguration of which was due to Mademoiselle Rachel, took place at the Théâtre Français. The tragedy was "Les Horaces." Between the acts the *tragédienne* recited a poem in honor of Corneille, "La Muse Historique," by M. Theodore de Bauville. Language has been exhausted to convey an idea of Rachel's *Camille*. Nothing has been left unsaid. Whatever might be the rank assigned by the author to his personages, the actress took the first for hers. Voltaire considered the end of the fourth act as an episode; with Mademoiselle Rachel it was a second play, so new, so eloquent, so appalling, that it effaced all remembrance

of the first, and when she had finished all seemed to end with her, for the public thought neither of the old father nor of the youthful victor, nor of *Sabine*, nor of *Emile*, still less of *Valère*, or of the salvation of Rome too cheaply purchased with the grief and desolation of a single house.

In Corneille the episode begins with the monologue of *Camille*. With Mademoiselle Rachel the play begins with the first scene of the fourth act. And when, too, *Valère* relates the combat that ends with her lover's death, the mute but terrifically eloquent by-play of the actress engrossed all the attention of the public. No one thought of the old man who had lost his two brave sons, but gained eternal honor by the third; all the tragedy was in the brow, the sinking form of *Camille*.

That which constituted the superiority of Rachel was the unique, the superlative grace that was in every motion—a grace that no violence of passion could annul. This grace, mingling with the terror she so readily conveyed to every heart, acted like a magical charm that subdued and ravished all who saw her, yet was inexplicable to the very ones who acknowledged its influence.

She risked every thing and seemed to risk nothing. She dared more than the author; she went beyond him in reality, yet she had so completely the art of assimilating what she did to the tragedy itself, that she and it were identified. She dallied with the agonies of the flesh. She imitated to perfection the work of physical destruction, and yet the body, the obedient instrument of her will, which reproduced with such frightful truth the shivering, the convulsive throes of approaching death, transformed that horror into an ideal of grace. Every one has witnessed the scene; there is nothing new, and yet the effect is as powerful the last as the first time; there was a something there that could neither weaken nor fall.

With Mademoiselle Rachel there was no counting of time, of lines, of verses; the real tragedy was in her heart, and the spectator followed its action on her brow, in her motions; according to her inspiration, she gave you at times a whole scene in a line, in a word. Her deepest dejection, her weakness, were full of might. However crushed she appeared by the blow, you felt instinctively she would pass suddenly from

that prostration to the extreme of fury; that the violence of the passion would outstep all limits; that amid this wild rage, this apparently ungovernable outbreak, there was a strong will curbing and subduing it all: there was inspiration guided by study, passionate ardor restrained by cool judgment.

This part always remained a favorite one with the *tragédienne*. Wherever she went, she made her *début* in it on every stage. It was in this *rôle* she appeared on the most important day of her life—that which decided her fate—that on which the doors of the temple were first opened to admit its future priestess—that on which she was to set foot for the first time on the stage that was to see her so triumphant.

For the following account of the scene we have the authority of Monsieur Janin:

It was the summer of 1838. Some half a dozen persons had assembled in the darkened theatre, glad to escape the blaze of the noon-day sun, but anxious to get through the wearisome task before them—that of hearing, for the hundredth time, perhaps, the finest poetry in the French language marred by the wretched delivery of a new claimant of the *three débûts* granted to those deemed worthy: the judges were to decide whether the public should be called to endure the *ennui* they had themselves tested.

The appearance of the neophyte was not prepossessing. Scant, mean apparel, a pale face and meagre figure, betokened a childhood spent amid the want and privations attendant on poverty, and gave the idea that at that very moment the girl might be suffering from hunger. What could be hoped from such a source? Who would have ventured to prophesy that the shadow before them was the reality and the life—the resurrection of the art; that the gruff but weak voice was to say to the slumbering poets, Arise and follow me? The assembled judges were there as a matter of form, to get through an indispensable task; not from any conviction of its use, for they had ceased to believe in the return of the tragic Muse since she had fled bearing in the folds of her tunic her last representatives, Talma and Duchesnois.

The girl came forward, but, contrary to all expectations, she did not, with frantic gestures, bawling voice, and time-consecrated emphasis, give the

"Rome! l'unique objet! de mon ressentiment!"

with eyes that suddenly gleamed like living coals in their dark orbits. She uttered in a low, deep, firm tone, as though she spoke to herself, words that really doomed to destruction the proud city:

"Rome l'unique objet de mon ressentiment."

It was evident this was no mere transitory anger, no burst of evanescent fury. There was a depth of passion, of concentrated, earnest, implacable resentment, the more fearful as it was not violently demonstrative; indeed, there was hardly a gesture; but, as she proceeded in those terrific anathemas, the impression on the hearers was that made by the approaching storm—at first low and distant, but coming nearer and nearer at every fearful peal, and finally bursting over their heads, scattering ruin and destruction. Each of the astonished judges looked at his neighbor's face to read his thoughts. The wisest deemed the thing accidental, a freak of chance. None there saw the signs of a revolution. All agreed to give the girl the solicited permission to play thrice on their stage; after which they went to dinner, and thought no more about it.

---

## CHAPTER XXVIII.

### 1854.

The first real Affliction.—Death of Rebecca Felix.—The Rosary.—The "Pardon."—Miss Smithson.—Mademoiselle Sontag.—A Warning.—A Letter from M. Legouvé.—Letters from Mademoiselle Rachel and her Secretary.—Mademoiselle Rachel condemned to play "Medée."—Mademoiselle Rachel doesn't play "Medée."—"Rosemonde."—Another Miscalculation.

Amid these continual triumphs, obtained, as it were, against the will of the very ones who contributed their meed of applause, a great grief, the first real one that had ever been felt by the *tragédienne* during the course of her fêted and brilliant career, interrupted this happy life, this long summer's day. Her favorite sister Rebecca died.

Rebecca Felix, when in her fifteenth year, in 1843, made her *début* in *Chimène*. She continued some time to act in tragedy, but good sense, personified in the person of her father,

soon saw an imminent danger in her following in the footsteps of a sister who had already taken the first place in that branch of dramatic art. The lesser light could not fail to be lost in the stronger rays of the greater luminary. Rebecca could at best be but a faint copy of her sister. Her vocation was, therefore, very judiciously altered, and she entered the easier walks of the drama and of comedy. Her last and best effort was in "Mademoiselle de Belle-Isle." But a lung complaint that had succeeded a typhus fever cut short a career which, if it did not promise to be as brilliant as that of her sister, gave hope of some distinction.

Rebecca was—and deservedly so—the favorite sister of the *tragédienne*. We have seen, by her letter to M. Legouvé, that on her return from Russia she had hastened to visit the dear sufferer then in the Pyrenees, where she was waiting to take the Eaux Bonnes. When her *congé* expired she was compelled to resume her duties at the Théâtre Français. She continued, notwithstanding, her watchful care over her sister, and, while acting twice a week, managed to perform the journey to and fro thrice in as many weeks.

An incident occurred during one of these flying trips which proves not only the excitable nature of Rachel, but also that the visit to the Vatican had made a more permanent impression than was supposed.

The disease, according to the wont of that treacherous malady, had appeared to take a favorable turn; the alarming symptoms had momentarily vanished; the patient was suddenly relieved. Mademoiselle Rachel, who had been a constant attendant for some days, took the opportunity to go and see Sarah, who was confined by some temporary indisposition to her own lodgings. Several friends were assembled in the room, and, exhilarated by the good news she had brought and the hopes all hastened to build on the change, Mademoiselle Rachel began to chat and laugh quite merrily. In the midst of this exuberant gayety her maid broke into the room in a state of great excitement: a fit had come on; the patient was in much danger; the physician desired Mademoiselle Rachel's immediate presence. Rising with the bound of a wounded tigress, the *tragédienne* seemed to seek, bewildered, some cause

for the blow that fell thus unexpectedly. Her eye lighted on a rosary blessed by the Pope, and which she had worn round her arm as a bracelet ever since her visit to Rome. Without, perhaps, accounting to herself for the belief, she had attached some talismanic virtue to the beads. Now, however, in the height of her rage and disappointment, she tore them from her wrist, and, dashing them to the ground, exclaimed, "Oh! fatal gift! 'tis thou hast entailed this curse upon me!" With these words she sprang out of the room, leaving every one in mute astonishment at her frantic action.

On the 23d of June, four sisters and a mother brought back to the father's house in Paris the body of the lamented lost one. On the day of the burial a scene took place of the most moving description, and in which the different tempers of two of the survivors were brought to light very forcibly.

There is a rite among the Jews denominated the *Pardon*. Before the body of a deceased child of Israel is carried out to be buried, the relatives, one after the other, go up to it, and, calling out the name several times, invoke forgiveness for any ill examples or ill treatment they may have been guilty of toward the deceased when living, ending with the repetition three times of the word pardon! pardon! pardon! When it came to Sarah's turn, the consciousness of her manifold errors came over her with terrible force, and, joined to the horror and grief of the moment, so overpowered that sensitive, excitable, passionate nature, that, falling prostrate on the ground, she shrieked the name of the dead one in heart-rending tones, calling with sobs and tears for forgiveness.

There were two strangers present, two Christians, the actor Laferrière and a lady. When Sarah was raised and taken out, the mother said hurriedly to the Christians, "It is Rachel's turn now; for God's sake, go; do not look at her—do not stop."

"No," added young Dinah, "don't stay; don't let Rachel think you watch her." The consciousness all the family had of Rachel's reserved, peculiar disposition, and the respect with which they submitted to its exactions, is surprising.

The strangers of course withdrew, but not before they had caught a glimpse of Rachel, led by her father, approaching

mute, with brow deeply gathered, while all the other members of the family stood aside, seemingly dreading what was coming.

Mademoiselle Rachel withdrew into Belgium after this loss. Her health required change of scene, and she chose Brussels, that she might be near the physician in whom she placed most reliance.

Miss Smithson, the English actress who had made so favorable an impression in France, died in the spring of this year. The French critics exhausted every expression of regret on this untimely loss.

But in the autumn the news reached Europe of a death that was more deeply felt than either of the preceding ones—that of Henrietta Sontag, Countess Rossi. Though the world-wide celebrated *cantatrice* had fulfilled the career, in regard to years, of a singer—though hers could not be called a premature loss, like those of the two actresses carried off, the one in the full flush of youth, the other in the maturity of her talent, there were circumstances attending it that rendered it far more sad and gloomy than theirs. This noble-hearted woman, venturing again on the scene of former triumphs at the risk of withering the laurels of past years and annihilating the very memory of her fame, seeking in a new world to recuperate the loss of fortune entailed on her children, and dying in that far-distant land away from those for whom she struggled so valiantly and whom she loved so dearly, left deep regrets in the hearts of all those who had known her. The amiability and kindness of her disposition, her conduct as a wife and as a mother, had won her as much love and respect in private life as her vocal talents had fame and admiration in her public career. From the Grand-Duke, who does honor to her memory with the crown of silver laurels he deposits on her coffin, to the poor waiting-maid who with tears continually recalls the constant goodness of her mistress, the laments her loss occasioned were heard from the lips of all who had been privileged to approach her.

This year, too, died one whose life and end contrast sadly with the last, and should be a useful lesson to the young and presumptuous, who deem that headstrong will and ambition

constitute power, were they ever willing to take warning from such terrible examples.

While Mademoiselle Rachel was throning at the Théâtre Français in the full maturity of her powers, and receiving more applause and broad pieces than any of her predecessors had ever done, one, who at the very commencement of her successful career had attempted competition with her, was expiring on board a miserable craft bound for that *refugium peccatorum*, California. The body, wrapped in an old sail, with a huge mass of coal as weight, and thrown into the deep with few regrets and fewer prayers, was all that remained of the once gay, vain, handsome Helena Gaussin.

Like many other unfortunates who, in the outset of life, mistake high spirits, minds impatient of restraint, and confident self-esteem for the qualities that insure success, and imagine that bright eyes and fine forms will compensate the lack of good sense, judgment, and experience, Helena had added one more to the host of aspirants who, allured by the marvelous good fortune of the young Jewess, deemed that they also were entitled to dispute the scenic palm. She bore a name that was in itself a title, but she justified it only in its worst acceptation, and imitated her famous *homonyme* only in the foibles that obscured her artistic fame; for of the great points that distinguished the Mademoiselle Gaussin of 1731, her namesake of 1840 possessed not one.

Those who saw her in her *débûts* in classic tragedy at the Odéon, mistaking her *eclat*, her dashing style, for inspiration, for the *feu sacré*, admiring her splendid stature and regal gait, prophesied a second Mademoiselle Georges. She certainly recalled her beauty, but not her talent. She made no progress, though she had numerous opportunities of advancement, had she possessed the requisite qualities. Unfortunately, she could not see where the fault really was. Of an excitable temper, extreme in good or evil, and ungovernable in either case, she threw the blame of her defeat on her whom she denominated her rival, Rachel, and attempted revenge by hissing her. This impotent expression of rage sealed her fate. After the scene of tumult and disorder to which her unbridled rage had given rise, she was forcibly expelled, and the doors of the

Théâtre Français were forever closed against her. She took refuge in the provinces, and reigned there with uncontrolled sway for some time. Her next appearance in the columns of the newspapers was in a very different character—to her name was attached the ignominious epithet of thief. The *Mérope* had stolen dinner-plate. *Athalie* had enveloped her diadem in the greasy napkins of a *restaurante*. When she came out of prison a man was found generous enough to give his name to conceal her shame. But nothing could save her. Once again she was on the police sheets for theft; once more that beautiful hair was cut, and she was sent to keep company with the lowest and most abandoned of her sex.

Mistaken vanity had crazed the weak brains, and the next time poor Helena was heard of was in the *rôle* of a prophetess, preaching a new gospel, receiving communications from the divinity. In 1848 she was apprehended on the Barricades, where, with waving banner and frantic words, this Tisiphone was inciting the populace to deeds of blood.

It was then that some charitable persons, pitying the degradation and wretchedness of the poor outcast, obtained means for her to be sent to California, and it was on her way thither that, worn out by excesses of every description, alone and friendless, the unhappy creature died, having, in the course of an existence that lasted but thirty years, run the gauntlet of every sin and every shame.

Notwithstanding the last-announced resignation, Mademoiselle Rachel reappeared on the 18th of September in the *rôle* of *Marie Stuart*, playing with a perfection of *entente de la scene* that she had never before displayed in this, one of the greatest of Schiller's conceptions—one which the French translator could not wholly spoil.

But, while Mademoiselle Rachel delighted the public, in whose good graces she now seemed completely reinstated, she had either forgotten, or she did not choose to remember, that in the month of April she had written to M. Legouvé, "At the expiration of my *congé* I will undertake 'Medée.'" M. Legouvé had not the same motives for short memory, and, seeing she took no notice of him or his production, though she had made her *rentrée* in May, ventured to recall it to her.

She again sought an excuse in her sister's illness; her grief incapacitated her from studying a new *rôle*. But the subterfuge was of no avail; the poet would be put off no longer, and returned the following answer, written in a spirit of inflexibility quite foreign to his nature, but always within the limits of courtesy he was incapable of outstepping:

"DEAR MADAME,—No one can sympathize more deeply with the sorrows of others than one who, like myself, has experienced similar ones, and I also know how much courage is required to undertake any kind of occupation when the heart is full of anxiety. But, alas! the stern law of necessity governs us all. We are all compelled to pursue the exercise of our profession amid anxieties of all kinds, and I may add that this necessity of labor is perhaps the only real alleviation of deep grief.

"You have had within your own knowledge a very striking proof of this. Four years ago, one of your most honorable comrades, M. Regnier, lost his daughter; but he had promised M. Augier he would play in 'Gabrielle,' and the success he obtained in that play was all the more gratifying from the consciousness that in subduing a grief he had accomplished a duty and obliged a friend.

"I can well understand, dear madame, that in the first moments of grief the recent sight of the dear patient occasions you should dread the creation of a new *rôle*, but I am also sure that on reflection you will acknowledge that we have no right to sacrifice the interests of others to any private considerations of our own, even the most legitimate, and that you will seek support in an increased devotion to the duties incumbent upon you and in the interests which have been confided to you.

"This is, perhaps, a very serious letter, dear madame, but I know to whom I write it. I may add that it is even in the name of your dear sister herself that I ask you to resume again the rehearsals of 'Medée.' You know she liked the work, and already foresaw you in it full of passion and pathos. Give her, then, the greatest pleasure she can owe you, the news of a new success obtained by you.

"I remain, &c., LEGOUVÉ."

This letter made no impression on her to whom it was addressed. Seeing, however, that the position was becoming one of immediate difficulty, she had recourse to the ordinary and extraordinary diplomatic negotiations. She commissioned the discreet and skillful agent who had been the former medium of communication to signify her ultimatum to M. Legouvé, and with this object addressed to Mademoiselle de Saigneville a letter, which the latter was to show to the author, but not leave in his hands.

Mademoiselle de Saigneville commenced on the 20th of September her negotiation as follows:

"It is with the deepest grief, dear M. Legouvé, that I send you my friend's letter (I beg you will return it as soon as you have read it).

"I will not seek to justify Rachel's conduct toward you. You see that she herself acknowledges her fault, and that she is right in believing that I give her a great proof of my attachment in consenting to communicate so sad a resolution to you. But believe me, *do not insist;* make this sacrifice to the future. She has obtained another leave of absence. She will return again next year, and, if you are generous enough to remain her friend, how powerful will be your right to make her play in some other work! She has resolved *never* to create another modern tragic part. She says the ancient classic repertory will furnish her with more characters than she can create. (And here she may be right.)

"Come, now, be noble and generous; set to work, write for her an interesting drama, such as you know so well how to make, and we shall all be happy. SAIGNEVILLE."

The letter alluded to as accompanying the above ran as follows:

"DEAR LOUISE,—I come to beg you will undertake a mission to M. Legouvé. I know well how disagreeable it will be to you, but you have so accustomed me to your kind offices that I do not fear to rely on them in such a case of necessity.

"I positively can not play *Medée*. It is in vain that I have endeavored to undertake it. I have gone so far as to learn all the first act, but I have such an antipathy to the part that it were vain for me to expect sympathy in a character that is almost odious, and that is too well known to cause any sensation in the public, even in the most terrific passages. You see, dear friend, what a task I am giving you. I dare not write to M. Legouvé, fearing he should come to me immediately, and indeed I am not sufficiently restored to my usual health to look at and listen* coolly to the almost deserved reproaches which the author of 'Medée' has perhaps a right to make, for I have accepted the *rôle;* I have even rehearsed it twice at the theatre; but, although I may have been tenfold wrong, I can not bind myself to play well a part unsuited to my tragic powers. I can not, therefore, go forward and risk a failure when the moment when I shall quit the stage is not far distant.

"Go and see, or write to M. Legouvé. What I exact of your love for me, for our *Adrienne*, is that M. Legouvé will still remain my friend, despite the vexation I cause him, and which I so earnestly desire to cancel some day.

"'Les Horaces' greatly fatigued me this evening. To-morrow I shall go and breathe the air of Montmorency; for Heaven's sake, use your endeavors that M. Legouvé be not too angry with me. You know how very little suffices to shake my poor nerves and cause me great suffering.

"I am your devoted friend; prove to me on this occasion that I can also rely on you. RACHEL."

This desire, so coaxingly expressed, to be friends with the author, even the tender allusion to his play, "our *Adrienne*," all was insufficient to fool him any longer; his patience was exhausted, and Mademoiselle Rachel was again sued to appear on the 19th of October.

In the mean while she continued to play her classic *rôles*, delighting the numerous spectators who, attracted by the Ex-

* When Mademoiselle Rachel sent this letter it is probable she had not her usual secretary at hand, and was obliged to indite as well as write it herself.

position Universelle from every part of Europe to Paris, took that opportunity of hearing her. The poor young woman little foresaw that this was the last season but one she would be permitted to display her talent on the French stage, on which, had she been less grasping, less eager for rapid gains, she might have pursued a longer, more lasting, and more glorious career.

In the mean while the day appointed for the trial arrived. On the 18th of October the hall of the Tribunal de Première Instance was crowded. M. de Belleyme, a magistrate as well known for his strict principles of justice as for his love of arts, presided. The born champion of the victims of their passions and of artists of every kind, M. Chaix-d'Est-Ange, was there, ready to cover Mademoiselle Rachel's sins with the folds of his toga, while M. Mathieu, a clever and witty young lawyer, was appointed to expose the griefs suffered by M. Legouvé.

The task of the latter was not a difficult one, for the proofs were numerous and clear.

The orator thought proper to take up the matter in hand from the beginning of the friendship that had existed between his client and Mademoiselle Rachel. Having dwelt on the motives that had given rise to that friendship, and entitled the author to some gratitude on the part of the actress, he gave the origin of "Medée," written at Mademoiselle Rachel's request, enthusiastically applauded by her and the competent areopagus assembled in her *salon* to decide on its merits, in confirmation of which, letters were read addressed to M. Legouvé by Messieurs Henri, Martin, and Charlton; the subsequent reception of the play by the *comité de lecture* of the theatre and its rehearsel there, also corroborated by letters from Messieurs Haitland, Règnier, Maubant, and Davesne. M. Mathieu then related the fickle conduct of the actress, her several capricious refusals, her want of good faith, the condescension of M. Legouvé on the eve of her departure for Russia.

"He was not aware," exclaimed the eloquent advocate, "that this great *artiste*, whose excursion had cost the Théâtre Français more than 200,000 francs, had another god besides her art. He was soon obliged to recognize that, for her, the stage was but a means—gold was her aim."

He then stigmatized her conduct toward France, to whom she was bound, who could have opposed her voyage to Russia, and yet who generously furthered it, receiving in return as a testimonial of the actress's gratitude the notification of her resignation on her return. M. Legouvé shared the same fate; he, too, was rewarded for all the proofs of devoted friendship he had shown her by the notification that "decidedly she could not play *Medée*."

The orator concluded by saying that French literature was interested in the question.

"It must not," said he, "be left to the mercy of Mademoiselle Rachel's caprices. It was not thus that Talma acted. Many authors have had cause to complain of Mademoiselle Rachel's fantastic versatility. She also refused to play 'La Fille du Cid' after accepting the part. 'Virginie,' 'Charlotte Corday,' 'Frédégonde and Brunehaut' were alike accepted, rejected, and accepted again without reason. Mademoiselle Rachel must be compelled, under some severe penalty, to keep her engagements. It is much to excite admiration, but esteem is of more value; and nothing can make amends for want of integrity, not even glory."

The case of Mademoiselle Rachel was a difficult one to defend, and with all his skill M. Chaix-d'Est-Ange could not prove that she had not solicited M. Legouvé's tragedy, that she had not personally approved and applauded it, that she had not caused it to be rehearsed, had not taken her part and distributed the others, and that, after numerous and long delays, she had not, under fallacious pretenses, refused the work.

The only part of his plea in which he could retort with some show of success his adversary's arguments was when he endeavored to answer the reproach that Rachel had but one idol—gold. He insisted that the reproach was equally applicable to the other side.

"Mademoiselle Rachel," said he, "is accused of loving gold beyond all things, beyond her art, beyond her glory. Gold is her god. Yet we notice that M. Legouvé has not for gold the contempt he would lead us to infer he had. He begins by claiming 40,000 francs damages. It would ill become him to affect indifference for pecuniary interests. No, no; gold for him is no chimera."

M. Legouvé, however, immediately paralyzed the effect of this argument *ad hominem*, by declaring that he had fixed the amount for the sake of form only; that he renounced it altogether, and left the penalty entirely to the discretion of the tribunal.

The court decided against Mademoiselle Rachel, who was to resume and continue "on the days designated by the management of the Théâtre Français" the rehearsals of "Medée," and act the part designated for her by the author, or in default thereof to pay to M. Legouvé damages to the amount of 200 francs for every day she delayed doing so, and that during two months, after which a farther decision would be taken.

This decision would seem, at first sight, very satisfactory to M. Legouvé; it was, however, followed by no result, the management of the Théâtre Français, to whom was left the right of appointing the days of rehearsal, having failed to do so. It was not until some time after that M. Legouvé was to obtain a more adequate compensation for the injury he had sustained.

As for Mademoiselle Rachel, she was on the eve of finding in her very ingratitude its severe and deserved punishment. If she had disdained the charms of "Medée," it was not on account of the little failings and misdeeds of the enchantress, but because she had been allured by a dame of like gentle temper, one *Rosemonde;* not the fair Rosamond of English ballads and tradition, whose beauty was fatal to herself alone, but a Lombard queen whom M. Latour de St. Ybars aroused from her peaceful slumbers in the old nooks of Gothic story to bring before the Parisians under the patronage of Mademoiselle Rachel.

It appears that Mademoiselle Rachel had knocked at more than one door to obtain the "short tragedy containing one very brilliant part" which she had solicited of M. Legouvé. "Medée," with her three acts and her suite, was not what she wished; "Rosemonde," with her one act and three personages, pleased her better. "Medée" was a *rôle* of the ancient *repertoire*, minus the superiority of the great masters. "Rosemonde" was the frantic, disheveled offspring of young

literature, that was to stand forward with *eclat* in the gallery of antiques that constituted Mademoiselle Rachel's dramatic luggage.

It now became plain that while the *tragédienne* was alleging her health, her resignation, her excursions, her domestic afflictions to avoid playing *Medée*, declaring solemnly she never intended creating another *rôle*, that fear would paralyze her powers, that the press would not sustain her, that she would not risk compromising seventeen years of success by a failure, she was at that very time busy studying *Rosemonde*. She was learning it in secret with the passionate enthusiasm she had shown for *Louise de Lignerolles*. She flattered herself with the hope of crowning her Parisian career with a brilliant triumph, and deemed she could carry to America a play, short and easy to get up, that would afford an opportunity for the display of all her powers, and the entire interest of which would centre in herself.

The decision of the court that sentenced Mademoiselle Rachel to play "Medée" was pronounced on the 21st of October. On the 27th of November, Mademoiselle Rachel, encouraged by the complaisant complicity of the manager, appeared for the first time in "Rosemonde."

What motive could have actuated the *tragédienne* to adopt so strange a course it is difficult to imagine. It could scarcely be that the remembrance of her success in "Virginie" was proof against that of her failure in the absurd "Vieux de la Montagne." At any rate, whatever hopes author and actress had raised on the present preposterous creation were doomed to disappointment. Mademoiselle Rachel had hoped that horror carried to the utmost limits would cause a great sensation. The effect was the opposite to that expected; the spectators were rather inclined to laughter—the great *tragédienne* was simply ridiculous!

"Rosemonde," withal, possessed one merit, and that a very great one in the present case—there was but one act of it. Yet it was a tragedy, and the author, by virtue of that title, had a right to inflict five acts on the public. Notwithstanding what some modern author says, that it is "so easy not to make tragedies in five acts," some credit is due to M. Latour

St. Ybars for his forbearance. He suppressed the first four and served up the last only, crowding into that one all the horrors he was at liberty to have spread over five acts.

The theme chosen is one of the ferocious incidents that abound in the early history of every nation. The author can not be accused of having altered or disguised historical truth; on the contrary, he has veiled none of its hideous nakedness, he has softened none of the revolting particulars.

M. Latour evidently meant to draw forth all the chief characteristics of Mademoiselle Rachel. His attempt was not altogether ill founded. Setting aside the impossibility of reconciling with the laws of modern taste the ghoulish incidents he allowed to stand, there were dramatic points which a great poet would have made very effective. But, unfortunately, in "Rosemonde" we have the most intensely tragic occurrences developed in the most trivial, weak, nerveless language. The ferocity of the idea is completely lost in the tameness of the expression; that which in the magnificent, passionate, all-powerful poetry of Victor Hugo would have sent a thrill of terror through every heart, in the milk-and-water style of M. Latour caused *ennui* or derision.

According to the chronicler, after reigning three years and a half in Italy, Alboin was assassinated by his wife in 373. The cause of the crime was the following:

The king, having become excited with wine during a banquet, ordered that a bowl, made of her father's skull, should be presented to the queen, bidding her joyously drink with her father (*ut cum patre suo lætanter biberet*).

"The thing," adds the old narrator, Paul Diacre, "may appear impossible, but I speak the truth in Jesus Christ—I have seen the bowl."

The unfortunate Rosemonde being informed afterward what bloody trophy had touched her lips, vowed revenge. Having seduced the king's armor-bearer, Helmichis, and Peredeus, one of the bravest champions among the Lombards, she caused the king to be assassinated.

M. Latour, suppressing such details of the seductions employed by the queen as were too disgusting for the stage, and which may be found at length in Gibbon's "Decline and Fall

of the Roman Empire," gives the story in all its barbaric horrors.

*Alboin*, King of the Lombards, having vanquished and killed *Cunimund*, King of the Gepidæ, chooses among the captives *Rosemonde*, the daughter of his late foe, for his queen. At a banquet given to celebrate his victory, the barbarian, maddened with the fumes of debauch, compels *Rosemonde* to drink from the skull of her father. Among the earls of *Alboin* is one who, having been sent some time previous to the war on an embassy to her father's court, had seen and fallen in love with *Rosemonde*. Absent on another expedition at the time of the defeat of *Cunimund*, he returns to find the daughter has been selected by the victor. *Earl Didier* is consequently the fittest instrument for her vengeance. To arm his hand against his king, she promises her own and the crown as his reward. When the deed is perpetrated *Rosemonde* fulfills part of her promise. She recommends *Didier* to the people as the successor of *Alboin*, and places the crown on his head. As for herself, she dies on her father's grave of the poison she has taken. One or two other deaths of minor importance fill up this framework of murder, profanity, treason, and vengeance.

This tragical story has been dramatized more than once already by French poets. We find it put on the stage as far back as the year 1609 by Claude Billard, Prior of Canterbury, the same who the following year caused the "Death of Henry IV." to be played before Marie de Medicis in mourning. A year or two before, Nicholas d'Argentan wrote his "Alboin ou la Vengeance Trahie." In 1649, Balthazar Baro again put "Rosemonde" upon the stage. In more modern times Alfieri also chose this heroine, though not at the same period of her life. Indeed, he laid aside the facts altogether, and substituted incidents of his own invention.

The choice of the locality itself, though historically faithful, jars with all our preconceived ideas. True, all Italy was at the time devastated by the barbaric hordes of the North; yet one would not wish to find the scene which the loves of *Romeo* and *Juliet* have invested with such tender and melancholy associations, the fair city sought with delight by the antiquary and anticipated so gracefully by the poet—

"Are these the distant turrets of Verona?
And shall I sup where Juliet at the masque
Saw her loved Montague, and now sleeps by him?—

selected as the charnel-house, the shambles in which wild beasts enact their butcheries. M. Latour does not say with Dante,

"Vieni a veder Montecchi e Cappeletti."

He bids us look on a far different scene. Here we have neither the rose nor the nightingale; we have an orgie in which besotted barbarians, drunk with the fumes of blood and wine, and despairing captives, the living spoils of the most ferocious war, are mingled; the former are howling the burden of their song of battle, with accompaniment of cymbals, horns, and clashing shields. The song of the bard is in keeping with the deeds he celebrates.

Some dramatists are induced to choose their epoch and nation on account of the picturesque beauty of the costume of that time and people. If we consult the historian we will hardly be inclined to accuse M. Latour of having been guided by any such puerile considerations.

"The dress of the ancient Lombards consisted of loose linen garments; their legs and feet were clothed in long hose and open sandals; and even in the tranquillity of peace a sword was constantly girt to their side; their heads were shaven behind, but their hair before hung over their eyes and mouth, and a long beard represented the name and character of the nation."

For farther particulars we have the testimony of Cunimund, the Prince of the Gepidæ:

"The Lombards," said the rude barbarian, "resemble in figure and smell the mares of our Samaritan plains."

"Add another resemblance," replied an audacious Lombard; "you have felt how strongly they kick. Visit the plains of Asfeld, and seek for the bones of thy brother; they are mingled with those of the vilest animals."

The above interchange of compliments preceded the war and atrocities which are the groundwork of the tragedy.

Whether the actress was terrified at the responsibility she had assumed, or that, accustomed to the sublime beauties of

the classic *repertoire*, she felt herself uninspired by this modernized tissue of horrors, and, losing confidence in its success at the very moment of trial, lost confidence in her own powers, or whether the attitude of the public disheartened her, from whatever cause it might be, this character, so obstinately adopted in spite of all taste, reason, and judgment, was ill-sustained by her. It lingered a very few nights, and was then dropped forever.

With its manifold faults, the play possessed points well suited to Mademoiselle Rachel. It is said that Racine borrowed from the "Rosemonde" of Balthazar Baro the character of *Hermione*—Mademoiselle Rachel's best part. The scene of the Greek princess instigating *Orestes* to the murder of *Pyrrhus* certainly presents a striking analogy with that in which *Rosemonde* endeavors to persuade *Ermigius* to slay *Alboin;* the arguments used by *Hermione* and the answers of the hesitating, reluctant *Orestes*, though clothed in the far superior poetry of Racine, are the same, in reality, as those of Baro's heroine and hero; then, again, there is so great a resemblance in fact, between some of the situations of M. Latour's play and those of "Andromaque," that it is somewhat strange Mademoiselle Rachel did not feel sustained by the resemblance. There are others, too, where her tragic expression and attitudes had excellent opportunities of display; for instance, in the scene where the tyrant, mortally wounded, drags himself on the stage, and is met by *Rosemonde* entering with a lamp to ascertain if the deed has been well done. The king, on retiring, had found *Egilde*, one of *Rosemonde's* women, dressed in the regal robes, dead on his couch. He has mistaken her for the queen he had chosen, and, being set upon by his murderer, has had no time to discover his error; hence his first exclamation, when the real *Rosemonde* meets him, *à la Lady Macbeth*, with her lamp:

"Cette femme, quelle est cette femme?"

*Rosemonde.*

"La haine
"La vengeance, tardive, il est vraie, mais certaine."

*Alboin.*

"Ah!"

*Rosemonde.*

"Regarde-moi bien."

*Alboin.*

"Fantôme, que veux-tu?"

*Rosemonde.*

"Je veux te voir mourir à mes pieds abattu."

*Alboin (tombe près de sa couronne).*

"Rosemonde! . . . elle est morte."

*Rosemonde.*

"Elle est encore vivante
Pour jouir de ta mort et de ton épouvante."

*Alboin.*

"Mes armes! dieux d'enfer!" &c., &c.

*Rosemonde* makes a long speech to the dying king, the pith of which M. Latour found in the five magnificent lines of *Polynice* to *Eteocles*, in Racine's "Les Frères Ennemis:"

"Et tu meurs, lui dit il, et moi je vais règner
Regarde dans mes mains l'empire et la victoire
Va rougir aux enfers de l'excès de ma gloire;
Et pour mourir encore avec plus de regret,
Traître, songe en mourant que tu meurs mon soujet."

We can not say that *Rosemonde's* harangue is "sweetness long drawn-out," but the idea so concisely and powerfully expressed by Racine has been so expanded, diluted, spun out in M. Latour's prosy style, that all the original horror is lost.

The coldness with which the public received this feast of Atreus reacted on Mademoiselle Rachel. Her delivery was so precipitate, hacked, and indistinet, that it was often necessary to wait the reply to know the meaning of what she had said. It was true that she was never quite mistress of herself on first nights; but, aside from the emotion incidental to the fear of failure, there could not be in this queen of the French stage, whose will was omnipotent, the anxiety of the young and timid *débutante*, whose untried powers have few, if any, chances of pleasing. She had chosen the play, she had brought it out, she was bound to exert herself to the utmost for its support.

Either the vexation of failure, or some other unknown cause, acted on her nerves to such an extent that after the fall of the

curtain she was seized with a fit of hysterics that was so violent and lasted so long that it was feared her reason was in danger; she tore her veil, dashed from her the crown, and threw down, with looks of frantic horror, her poniard.

An explanation of this singular scene was sought in the supposition that it was the remembrance of the death of her sister Rebecca that had awakened a paroxysm of delirious grief. But it is difficult to find any analogy between this recent family bereavement and the tragedy of "Rosemonde."

The result of this last miscalculation was that Mademoiselle Rachel, vexed and ashamed, retired under the usual pretense of ill health.

Mademoiselle Rachel had introduced the celebration of the anniversary of Corneille; it occurred at last to the management that there was another great man to whom they were equally indebted, and the anniversary of whose birth was equally entitled to dramatic honors. On the 21st of December the Théâtre Français inaugurated the celebration of Racine's birth-day, the *tragédienne* condescending for that day to forget she was ill, and act "Phèdre."

Since the unfortunate exit of "Rosemonde," this was the first time Mademoiselle Rachel had appeared on the stage. She retired into her tent, and did not come forth again until the latter part of January of the following year.

---

## CHAPTER XXIX.

1855.

"La Czarine."—Melpomene in Hysterics.—A formidable Rival.—Adelaïde Ristori, the Siddons of Italy.—"Francesca da Rimini."—"La Pia de Tolomei."—"Maria Stuarda."

DURING her temporary absence from the stage Mademoiselle Rachel was studying a new *rôle*, in a drama in five acts, by M. Scribe, "La Czarine," which was brought out in January of this year. As the student of history will not think of consulting M. Scribe's plays as works of reference, it is unnecessary to quarrel with that author's peculiar mode of

treating historical events and personages; in truth, he has merely borrowed high-sounding names; the incidents and characters are entirely of his own invention.

Among the subjects that apparently pleased him best was the celebrated Catharine, wife of Peter the Great. Finding her very successful in the "Etoile du Nord," he tried her without the partition and at a more advanced period of her existence, substituting Mademoiselle Rachel for the musical charms of which he now divested her. The hero is no longer Peter the shipwright, enamored of the fair young gipsy, and committing no worse crime than that of an extra glass to drown the sorrow her absence occasions. At the present stage of his existence Peter is advanced in his imperial career; he has learned his various trades, and is now giving his subjects the benefit of his experience. He has already founded St. Petersburg, conquered Sweden, fought with Turkey, butchered his son Alexis, drowned in torrents of blood the conspiracy of the Strelitz, and carried to some extent his system of civilization, effected according to the principles of barbarism. Czar Peter is more at leisure now, and turns his mind entirely to his own little domestic affairs, which he regulates according to his usual expeditious system. To keep his hand in, this imperial executioner amuses himself with putting to death the admirers of his beloved Czarine. In fact, there is much more of the Ogre of fairy tales, and much less of the Czar in this *Peter* than there was even in the historical one, and he is much better suited for the tyrant of the melo-dramas in favor on the Boulevards than for the hero of a play at the Théâtre Français, whose more refined and critical audience tolerated with difficulty this brutal provost-marshal.

The *Czarine* has not one great quality, one marked characteristic, one attractive point to raise her above the common level; the author could not have written a more insignificant, pointless, colorless *rôle* for Mademoiselle Rachel. There is not from beginning to end a fine passage, an energetic speech.

The other characters are a set of Russians such as were presented as specimens of the nation at the Theâtre du Cirque during the Crimean war. There is an *Admiral Vilderbeck*, a

sort of Dutch-Russian, always tipsy, always ridiculous, who is the unconscious marplot in the play; *Jakinsky*, an automaton spy of the *Czar's:* he acts, but leaves the talking to others; *Menschikoff*, the unfortunate *Menschikoff* so ill-treated by La Harpe, expiates, by the gratuitous charge of poisoning *Peter the Great*, now brought against him by M. Scribe, the hatred which the people of France bore the *Menschikoff* of 1855; *Olga*, his daughter, a simple, candid little girl, who can, when required, show a very heroic spirit, but whose combustible heart catches fire like a little keg of powder at the approach of the spark *Sapieha; Sapieha*, a young Pole, cut on the pattern of the Lauzuns, a courtier fresh from the Versailles of the Œil de Bœuf.

With these stereotyped personages, reproduced again and again in their proper sphere at the Porte St. Martin, any dramatist of M. Scribe's school was sure to proceed on exactly the same plan as the master, and to produce a play in the same monotonous, lukewarm, and superficial style as the majority of those this fertile and skillful playwright has made the public applaud so repeatedly.

*Count Sapieha*, just arrived from the court of France, is the lion of the semi-barbaric court which *Czar Peter* is civilizing with his cane and pruning with the axe; the ladies of the court invite him to more *rendezvous* than he has time or inclination to attend to, for he aspires to no less than an imperial heart, and disdains the conquest of any lower station. *Peter*, who is as jealous as a tiger, has lately chopped off the head of *Mœus de la Croix*, the last admirer of his wife, and is looking out very sharply to catch the next. The fate of his predecessor only makes the new pretender more boastful and daring; he openly avows his hopes to *Vilderbeck*, a very faithful friend, but too much given to indiscretions when in his cups. *Catharine* knows of this love, and encourages it as an agreeable diversion to the *ennui* and repulsion the brutality of her spouse inspires. She is not a bit more discreet than her lover, and unhesitatingly develops her ideas on the subject to *Menschikoff*, who had himself been the happy possessor of her heart in former days, but, like a good courtier, had yielded it up to his master. *Menschikoff* does not object to the Czarine's

new fancy on moral grounds, but only as entailing dangerous results. *Peter*, who is absent, has set him to watch *Catharine*, but, having no great confidence in his minister, has appointed *Jakinsky*, another spy, to look after the first. *Menschikoff* repays the Czarine's frankness by the information that, having been, on some slight occasion, caned by his imperial master before all the court, he, the favorite, intends to take an early opportunity of paying back the little favor.

In the mean while the Czarine promotes *Count Sapieha* to the post of chamberlain, and *Olga*—who, following the fashion, has fallen in love with the dashing, Frenchified Pole, is unconsciously her rival—to that of maid of honor, and admits her, by a special favor, to lodge in a pavilion occupied by herself. So far matters have gone on smoothly enough, but here the *embroglio* begins. *Vilderbeck*, going home late in rather a confused state of mind, wanders into the gardens of the palace, finds a door open, enters a pavilion, and catches a glimpse of a lady in white, who screams and puts out the light. At this moment a powerful grasp is laid on his shoulders, and he is tumbled down stairs and out of doors very unceremoniously. The next morning he finds himself at his own door, half frozen, and quite unconscious how he got there. In the scuffle a chamberlain's key has been dropped; this key, picked up by *Jakinsky*, like Bluebeard's, gets every one into a scrape; it is shown to the Czar, whose suspicions it arouses. *Vilderbeck*, being questioned, relates his nocturnal adventure: it was too dark to recognize his assailant or the lady, and he was too tipsy to remember the locality of the scene. However, the key is proved to be the count's, and he is summoned before the imperial inquisitor. What was he doing there? He was there for—*Olga!* Very well, he must immediately repair damages by marrying *Olga*, who, on her side, knowing nothing of the adventure, joyfully consents to obey orders and take the husband provided for her.

The play might have been brought to a close here, the fascinating count turning out to have been in love with pretty *Miss Olga* all the time, and to have really made with her the *rendezvous* that has so greatly troubled the Czar and occasioned his spouse to be accused falsely. This natural conclu-

sion here would have added the "Czarine" to the long list of comedies furnished by M. Scribe, per contract, to the Gymnase. It may be that this was originally the case, and that it had remained in this state in M. Scribe's drawer until the time of the Crimean expedition, when the sequel was tacked on. The drama is all in the last three acts, in which are also all the allusions to Constantinople and to the Turks, the hated foes of *Peter the Great;* the Turkish embassador at the court of Russia is the man who once, thanks to *Catharine's* interposition, permitted the Czar to escape when he might have driven him into the Pruth. One might suppose these incidents would influence the action of the drama; they have, however, nothing to do with it. While *Menschikoff* and his master are having a little familiar discussion on political matters, a commonplace remark of *Peter* to *Olga*, who is present, with regard to her husband, draws forth an answer which arouses all his lately-appeased suspicions. *Sapieha* has not spent his wedding-night with his bride! The Czarine and the count exchange, when they think themselves alone, a few words, which, overheard by *Olga*, reveal that she has been only used as a cloak to shield her mistress. Feeling this the more deeply that she herself loves her husband, the poor little wife has still the magnanimity to endeavor to persuade the Czar that she is really loved by the count. Her generosity is of no avail. *Peter* is conscious that he is betrayed; he is determined on revenge. He exiles *Olga* to Siberia, and orders the execution of *Sapieha*. The Czarine uses her influence to save her favorite. She prevails on her former lover, the Turkish embassador, to convey her present one out of the kingdom in his own carriage. But on the road *Sapieha* learns the fate of *Olga*. Her noble devotion, her love for him, her beauty, and especially her youth, have changed the current of his love; he is no longer fascinated by the more mature charms of *Catharine;* he now adores his wife, and to share her lot, wherever it may be cast, he escapes from the embassador's carriage, rushes back to St. Petersburg, is taken, and brought out on a scaffold under the windows of the palace to be decapitated. The Czar, by a refinement of cruelty, compels the Czarine to view the scene, that he may catch on her countenance the signs of grief that

will be in his eyes the proof of her guilt. But the Czarine views the dismal preparations calmly, for she is resolved that she will end her own life when the count dies. Her coolness convinces the Czar of her innocence, and he countermands the execution, telling *Catharine* he now believes there was no love on her side for *Sapieha;* he adds that he is equally convinced *Sapieha* has none for her, having just intercepted the count's last adieu to his young wife, a letter full of expressions of passionate tenderness, in which he assures her she alone is mistress of his heart, &c., &c. *Catharine*, who could look on calmly when her lover was to lose his head, when she finds she has lost his heart is overwhelmed with rage. Careless of consequences, she vents her jealousy openly, and the incensed Czar reorders the execution. But, ere the sentence can pass his lips, his words are cut short by his own death. *Menschikoff*, in order to save his daughter, *Olga*, has hastened the execution of his plans; the Czar is poisoned by him. This sudden death puts other thoughts in *Catharine's* mind. She sends the count as embassador to Warsaw, with his bride; as for her, she will live only to reign.

On the following day there was a great dinner given in honor of the *tragédienne* by Doctor Véron, and St. Beuve, Mérrimée, Aubert, Halevy, M. Aloequart, and Scribe, were among the guests. The invitations had been issued, in all probability, when it was expected that the play and the actress would meet with the most brilliant success. The play had been evidently a failure: the actress had, as was usual with her on first nights, been far below her own standard. These disappointments had thrown a cloud over the doctor's entertainment which Rachel, feeling that it was partly owing to her, would willingly have dispelled. To get up a fictitious excitement, she, who was excessively abstemious, drank two glasses of Champagne. It produced no effect beyond a headache. As soon as the dinner was over she withdrew into another room and gave way to a fit of tears, after which she slipped away home.

M. Scribe, who was extremely uneasy, remarked to Mérrimée that he would not wonder if she never played the part again.

The "Czarine" was, however, played for a few nights, and then dropped forever.

This wretched production was the last of Mademoiselle Rachel's creations. Nothing remained of it but two portraits of her in the costume of the Czarine, a blue dress embroidered with gold, and a mantle of ermine, fine paintings by M. Geoffroy.

Mademoiselle Rachel had pursued her course for eighteen years without meeting a single competitor who could cause her any serious alarm, but now there arose a new star on the dramatic horizon, which threatened, if not to eclipse, at least to rival her. On the 24th of May Madame Ristori appeared at the Italian Opera House in the part of *Francesca da Rimini*. Never, perhaps, had a French actress been so universally admired in Paris as was this foreigner acting in a foreign idiom. Never certainly had she, even in her own land, where she was of course better understood, been the object of such extravagant encomiums. The critics pronounced her perfection, the public countersigned their decision. The success of the Italian Siddons was certainly without precedent if we consider that not over one fourth part of her audience understood what was spoken otherwise than as it was interpreted by the marvelous eloquence of the countenance, attitude, and gestures of the speaker. Her great effects were entirely due to the charm of the features, the magic of the exquisite voice.

When we say that the success of Madame Ristori was greater in France than it has ever been in Italy, we do not mean it to be inferred that there she was not duly appreciated. Though instances of the possessors of genius and talent meeting only with indifference from their fellow-citizens are numerous, and though the voice of the prophet seldom finds an echo at home, the applause of an Italian public has constantly followed the career of her whose admirable enunciation added new beauties to their harmonious language.

But it could not be expected that in towns where the theatre-going public remains always unchanged, enthusiasm can be kept up constantly by three or four dramatic works, brought before it by the same actress, however excellent she may be in her art, as in large capitals where the floating population is so numerous.

Thus, though long years had established the reputation of Madame Ristori in her native land, it was eclipsed by the more brilliant one a few weeks procured her in France. The perfect classic outline of this great talent had been hitherto fully admitted, but it remained for a Parisian audience—an audience of consummate critics, too long accustomed to excellence to tolerate mediocrity—to discern its mystic and ethereal characteristics. Hence the triumph of the great *artiste* was in France as complete as it was rapidly achieved.

The difference is easily accounted for.

To Italy belong bold and vivid feelings—enthusiasm that carries all before it—the passionate admiration of perfection of form, brilliancy of coloring, of the music which in that privileged land seems the echo of the hymn of joy with which the creation greets its Creator.

To France belongs the severe analyzation of the beauties of Nature, the more intimate realization of the dreaming, delicate touches of Art, a more studied appreciation of the undefined and shadowy subtleties of thought.

In Madame Ristori her countrymen admired the deep passions and energy that gave such startling reality to each part she represented.

In France these were equally admired, while the profound knowledge of human nature displayed in every glance, every gesture, every intonation of her flexible and musical voice, were better appreciated; and the soft, vague melancholy, which at times veils and spiritualizes the look of this actress, recalling visions of Ossian's daughters of the mist or of the gentle Undine of our German neighbors, was far better understood by the French than by the Italians.

The great originality of Madame Ristori's style consists chiefly in the union, so rarely met with, of dreamy reverie and ardent passion. This characteristic, so specially her own, is portrayed on her countenance; the aspiration toward the ideal is in every feature; the purity of the brow, the oval *contour* of the face, the somewhat severe lines of the Roman nose, the nameless grace of those of the mouth, indicate the noblest feelings, a heartfelt sense of the beautiful, and the love of whatsoever is virtuous and good.

Another cause for her success, which was wholly independent of the profession, was the high opinion held of her character as a wife and a mother. The spectator was, unconsciously perhaps, under the influence of this superiority. Ere she opened her lips the natural dignity of her manner predisposed in her favor, rendering every heart sympathetic; when she spoke the hearers were under the charm of a voice of unparalleled sweetness, revealing candor and goodness unbounded —a voice that came fraught with every noble and generous feeling directly from the heart that is their spring. The features and gestures may be schooled by strength of will and of intellect to represent a great tragic part, even by a mind of perverted principles. Consummate talent and long stage-experience may give the power of expressing every bitter, strange, and terrible effect of headlong, uncurbed passion with an energy and force that strike terror into every heart; but if that of the actress has no tender fibres, her voice none of the moving chords, the melting accents that indicate a pure and generous nature, she will awaken no sympathy in the spectators: they may admire, they can not love her.

The most charming of Madame Ristori's characters was undoubtedly that of *Francesca da Rimini*, and, among other performers famed for their talent, she alone could give us the image of the veiled tenderness, the struggle between duty and passion, the truth and purity of Dante's beautiful creation— she alone could embody the spirit of the fair *Francesca*. On what stage could we find another profile so full of majestic grace, the chaste confusion of those eyes overarched by so noble a brow, and that radiant smile called up by the evanescent joys of love; and, above all, where else could we find that voice, anon vibrating soft and girlishly gentle, then again quivering with the agony of grief—that voice we all recognize as that of *Paolo's* love? Its sound reaches the inmost soul of the listener, conveying far more meaning than the poetry it utters. Another actress might, perhaps, reproduce this type of *Francesca* with as much talent as Madame Ristori, but with that talent the charm that emanates from the purity of the woman, and which blends with and raises the genius of the *artiste* to so sublime a height, is a combination rarely—we

dare not say never—met with. Our *souvenirs* of Madame Ristori would lead us to look on any other *Francesca* as less chaste, less idealized.

These remarks will apply to Madame Ristori's style of acting in all her characters, but more especially to the part we have just mentioned, and to that of "La Pia de Tolomei." The play of "Silvio Pellico" is more properly an elegy in three acts than a tragedy. A succession of exquisite shades of feeling alone redeems his work from an otherwise insupportable monotony: it is rather a charming poem, of which the actress is the soul, than a play. M. Carlos Marenco, when he wrote his drama of "La Pia," drew his inspiration from Pellico's tragedy; the latter is superior with regard to style, but in both interest and vigor are lacking; the plot is weak, the characters are tame. The patriotic sentiment that animates the fine passages of *Francesca*, which every Italian knows by heart, makes the play tolerated on the stage, and an actress like Madame Ristori renders the "Pia" endurable. If, then, she causes such a sensation in plays that are dramatically below mediocrity, we may have some idea of what she could accomplish had she been the interpreter of a Corneille, a Racine, or a Shakspeare.

The part of *Maria Stuarda* has more variety, more striking dramatic situations; hence it excites more enthusiasm than those we have mentioned. The woman in her greatness and her weakness is here more apparent, particularly in the magnificent scene where, having struggled with admirably-expressed efforts against her rising wrath, the sarcasms of *Elizabeth* finally render it irrepressible, and it breaks out in a torrent of annihilating disdain and crushing contempt that overwhelms her rival; the rapturous, almost childish joy with which she then congratulates herself on having purchased without hesitancy, and at the price of almost certain death, the bitter pleasure of revenge, is one of the most superb pieces of acting ever witnessed on any stage.

To analyze the various inspirations that actuate the actress in this character, we should have to quote the whole of it. The sudden gesture when *Maria* speaks of the hidden dangers that surround her; the passionate joy of the prisoner who

once more sees the face of heaven, the trees, the birds, all nature; the scene where, preparing for death, she bids a last adieu to her handmaidens with such melting yet subdued affection, so queenly still in her condescension, yet so gentle, so womanly in all her love and care for these, her faithful ones; and, at the close, the heart-rending, ecstatic pause during which the bitterness of death contends with and is finally absorbed in the heavenly hope that transports her beyond the terrible present, is a sublime inspiration springing from a deep religious feeling, from a soul filled with love of the beautiful ideal.

In "Medea," so difficult a part to bring before a modern public, the actress had to conquer the same obstacles as in that of "Myrrha." While she made her audience shudder, she had the power of ennobling characters and passions the most appalling, of exciting sympathy for heroines scarcely to be tolerated on the stage, without, however, losing any of the terrific energy which is one of her chief characteristics.

In the French classic drama Madame Ristori would be equally successful; her interpretations of the feelings of a *Hermione*, a *Camille*, an *Emilie* would, we think, differ widely from that which has hitherto been given. The bitter sarcasm, the despairing anathemas, all the wild array of passions that disfigure poor human nature in these splendid types, and which, from the day of their creation, have been portrayed with the furious rant of a maniac, would by her be brought into bold relief with new and striking effect. The mission of the tragic poet is to excite, in the highest degree, emotions of terror and pity, and never can this aim be so successfully accomplished as when the actress unites the noblest gifts of the heart to a splendid and cultivated intelligence.

It is said, with what truth we know not, though we feel no inclination to doubt it, that Madame Ristori is in the habit of seeking in mental prayer, before going on the stage, the strength and nerve she exhibits in her different characters, and that she places implicit reliance on the religious inspiration thus sought. This is a view of the vocation of dramatic artists never before taken, and one which, should the example find imitators, might lead to great results. It would certainly tend to dignify and elevate in an extraordinary degree the

drama and its interpreters, and silence all the objections hitherto brought against them.

Those who have seen this charming actress in private life extol her modesty and simplicity. Her style on the stage partakes of her character—it is simple and unpretending in its very grandeur. She is *true* in the artistic sense of the word, for she takes from nature the most energetic expression of its passions, and always subordinates it to the laws of beauty with the exquisite tact that is innate in her. Were she to become more classical she might lose somewhat of her grace, while, on the other hand, a more familiar, a more natural style would impair her dignity. No clap-trap, no eccentricity is mingled with her acting. She has invented no system of her own, consequently can have no imitators. Content with studying the human heart, she gives the rein to her own instinctive sense of what should be. This is the whole secret of the success of those poets and painters who have reached the highest summit of art. To those who would approach the superiority to which Madame Adélaïde Ristori has risen, we would say, "Search your heart; if it be pure, honest, truly pious, you may succeed, for those qualities are more necessary to an artist who would be loved and admired than is generally supposed."

In reviewing the different phases of Mademoiselle Rachel's career, we have had occasion to appreciate the merit of the various critics who have made her the subject of their *feuilletons*. We do not lay claim to having given a complete list of them, but among the masters of the pruning-knife whose judicious and eloquent articles so greatly contributed to her exaltation, there is one we would feel it a reproach to have omitted, had we not reserved his name for a special mention when that of his gifted countrywoman should find its place in these pages. Of all the dramatic critics of the Parisian journals, M. Fiorentino, who is alike master of French and Italian, is the most capable of correctly judging the talent of the two *tragédiennes* and of establishing a parallel between them.

There are, doubtless, in dramatic art, beauties that may be recognized and appreciated by spectators who understand the

language but imperfectly. But, to examine the subject in all its bearings, and pronounce on its merits on all points, the conscientious critic must be perfectly familiar with the language; he must need no preliminary study to feel all its charm and power, to be a nice judge of elegance and purity of pronunciation, of correctness and truthfulness of intonation. He who does not possess this gift can only speak of the mimic talent of the actor. On all other points his opinion is subject to discussion, for his errors may be infinite.

An amusing instance of this occurred at the time Wallack and his company alternated with the Italian company at the Italian Opera House. A German family just arrived in Paris, and anxious to see the far-famed Madame Ristori, sent their *valet de place* to procure a box at the theatre where she performed. On the following night they were all installed at an early hour, and wondering at the little enthusiasm the half-empty house manifested. However, they listened attentively, neither understanding a word nor yet clearly making out the pantomime, but getting up, notwithstanding, a very lively admiration for the young and pretty Miss ——, whom they took for Madame Ristori. The next day they were congratulating themselves before some friends on their good fortune of the previous evening in seeing the charming Italian *tragédienne* in "Maria Stuarda," when, to their amazement, they were informed they had seen Miss —— in *Desdemona*.

More than one French critic might have found himself making a similar mistake. Not so M. Fiorentino, who, a Neapolitan by birth, is in wit and talent a Frenchman. This writer is one of the few foreigners who have acquired the French language in such perfection that to them it is as their own, and who have borrowed even the character of the nation that has adopted them. Since the days of the learned Abbé Galignani and Baron de Grimm, we know of none who, not a Frenchman born, has been so thoroughly French in his language.

M. Fiorentino did not attain his present high position in the ranks of the French press without some trouble. He has had to struggle against jealousies, to conquer antipathies, to confound calumnies, but he has at last succeeded in taking his

place. He openly edits the dramatic *feuilleton* of the "Constitutionnel," and, under the name of "De Rouvière," the musical *feuilleton* of the "Moniteur." Monsieur Fiorentino is especially noted for the correctness of his taste, for a style full of vivacity, piquancy, rich coloring, clearness, and elegance; the romantic neologism which might be excusable in an Italian, never throws a blemish over his productions.

No one has written a more faithful and more highly-finished portrait of Madame Ristori, yet he has not been in any degree influenced by his nationality, and has done as complete justice to the cosmopolitan Rachel.

If we have entered on a somewhat minute description of the rival that sprung up so unexpectedly before the eyes of the autocrat of the Théâtre Français, the effect her advent had on the capricious Rachel must excuse the apparent digression. From the voluntary retreat no prayers, no entreaties, no sense of equity could induce the imperious *sociétaire* to leave, the reception shown to Madame Ristori suddenly drew her. The echo of the applause so enthusiastically bestowed on the Italian Muse grated harshly on the ears of the French Melpomene; every word of praise addressed to another was a theft to her disadvantage. She was amazed that the public, in lieu of mourning her departure, thought her less worthily compensated; she was vexed to the soul when she found her caprices, her sulks, her imperious will totally unheeded, her smile or her frown no longer regulating the temperature within the walls of the temple. For the first time she trembled, for there was real danger: this was no competitor she could scorn or frown down. Right willing was she to descend from her throne and seek in distant lands the substantial gifts of Pluto, but she did not choose the vacant seat should be filled in the mean while. With swelling heart and lowering brow she went to see this fair-haired stranger who had crossed the Alps, bringing two crowns already from her own land, that of comedy and that of tragedy—a union of honors Rachel herself had failed to achieve.

It was on the 5th of June that Rachel, who had been vainly solicited to lend on the next evening her co-operation to the annual celebration of Corneille's birth-day, had gone to the Théâ-

tre Italien to see "Myrrha." At the moment that the daughter of *Pasiphæ* was receiving an ovation such as, perhaps, *Camille* herself had never been the object of, the latter came suddenly to the conclusion that she would grant what she had so obstinately refused; she then and there, in her box, at nine o'clock in the evening, dispatched a note to M. Arsène Houssaye, desiring her name should be put on the bills in the morning for the performance of *Camille*.

During the tragedy she had steadfastly gazed at *Myrrha* with mute, concentrated attention, but without giving the slightest token of approval. As an excuse for this discourteous conduct, a critic suggested that she was probably applauding internally. As a proof that her emotion was none the less powerful for being undemonstrative, he added that it had rendered her so ill that she was compelled to leave before the end of the play! Madame Ristori complaining to M. Legouvé of the incivility of her sister *artiste* in leaving in the middle of the play, "Madame," replied the poet, "the jealousy of Rachel was the only thing wanting to confirm your fame."

On the following evening, a box having been politely placed by the manager of the Théâtre Français at the disposal of Madame Ristori, it was her turn to examine with studious attention the French *tragédienne*. Her approbation, however, was not silent; it was openly and exceedingly enthusiastic, bestowed with all the Italian *fougue*. She took her glass from her eye only to applaud, and ceased to applaud only to take it up again and resume her admiring gaze.

The next evening *Myrrha* was again performed, and again did Rachel witness the performance, but this time she thought fit to send a complimentary message to Madame Ristori.

But, whatever her real feelings, it was soon evident that Rachel, piqued to the utmost by the faithlessness of the public, was determined to endeavor to arouse its former devotion, and turn the tide of allegiance that had dared to deviate from its proper course. She performed during the month of June the chief plays of her *repertoire* in quick succession, and with all the animation and talent she possessed.

But, though applause was liberally bestowed on her efforts,

she felt she no longer reigned alone. Each day the press teemed with the praises of Madame Ristori, and not on her talent only were these lavish encomiums bestowed; her beauty, her charming, unaffected simplicity of manner, her tact, her domestic virtues, all were continually the themes of admiration. This was wormwood to her who never could brook the semblance of a rival near her throne; but she had committed faults that were irretrievable, and now paid the penalty. She had offended the public, and now the public had found a new toy, and used it as an instrument to break the old one with. The vexation this caused her put an end to her hesitation with regard to the projected voyage to America; her indecision vanished at once, and she left Paris on Friday, the 27th of July, for London, determined, after fulfilling a short engagement there, to proceed to the States.

Hitherto she had constantly found some new excuse to delay signing her engagement with her brother Raphael, the projector and manager of this new expedition. A presentiment of evil seemed to have warned her against this last venture, and more than once she startled the expectant tribe of kindred by declaring she would not go. But the insolence of the Parisian public in daring to set up a new altar, in presuming to *invent* a new Muse, deserved condign punishment, and nothing less than this prolonged absence was judged sufficiently severe.

On the 30th of July the *tragédienne* appeared in "Les Horaces" at St. James's Theatre. The performance was honored with the presence of the Duke and Duchess of Aumale and the Duke and Duchess of Nemours, who applauded very warmly. The illustrious exiles were among the last of their countrymen who saw her on a European stage. The Duke of Aumale remarked to Mr. Mitchell, who saw him to his carriage, that "the beautiful language of Corneille, the language of his native land, had been to him like a refreshing dew after a burning summer's day."

On the 1st of August "Phèdre" was given; on the 3d, "Adrienne Lecouvreur;" on the 4th, "Andromaque;" on the 6th, "Lady Tartuffe;" on the 8th, "Adrienne Lecouvreur." After this series of performances Mademoiselle Rachel con-

sented to speak the dream in "Athalie" at an entertainment given on the 9th, at the Theatre Royal, Drury Lane, for the benefit of the French Benevolent Society.

## CHAPTER XXX.

1855.

Departure for America.—Passion for Cards and Affection for her Brother.—An ill-advised Expedition.—Voyage across the Atlantic.—Unpleasant Prediction.—A sad Augury.—Our past Errors pursue us through Life.—A Stimulant to Learning.—Spontaneous Generosity.—"La Marseillaise" in the New World.—A slight Cold.—Boston.—Philadelphia.

In London the resolution of the *tragédienne* had well-nigh failed her completely. Her reception by the English audience, with whom she was always a great favorite, had this time been exceedingly brilliant. She knew how generous and how capable of appreciating her was the public she was forsaking; she had strong doubts of the one she was going to see. The millions that had appeared so sure in the distance, as the time for gathering them approached, seemed very problematical, and now most unwilling was she to undertake the distant expedition.

We have now reached one of the most important events in the career of Mademoiselle Rachel; its dire results hung like a funeral pall over the remainder of her life, which it shortened and finally ended.

This ill-planned expedition, the subject of the most absurd and exaggerated reports, was altogether a financial speculation, in which art was even more than usually a secondary consideration. Rachel herself was but an instrument to advance the interests of others. Her whole family had conspired to bring about this grand *finale*, which was intended to make every member of it rich: the merit of its conception was due to the fertile imagination of Raphael. Inexperienced, hair-brained, full of chimerical illusions, the young Israelite imagined that the pockets of the citizens of the United States, mines richer and more inexhaustible than those of Peru, sole-

ly awaited the advent of his sister to yield up their ready-coined treasures. Even old Felix, who had hitherto manifested the most consummate skill and prudence in the management of his daughter's interests, was inoculated with this insane spirit of adventure, excusable in a man of thirty, but strange indeed in one of his age and experience. The contagious vertigo resembled the fatal one of old which was the precursor of the ruin of the nation. In the present case it was the hitherto fortunate Rachel who was doomed to pay the penalty of the family error.

From the day the fascinating vision of the American *placer* took possession of their bewitched imagination, there was no peace for Rachel. Continually pointing to the golden mirage the demon of covetousness spread before them, they assailed her with constant solicitations. Raphael, Sarah, Dinah, Leah, incessantly dinned into her ears the 1,700,000 francs realized by Jenny Lind in thirty-eight nights. An estimate was made of the expenses and profits of the expedition: the latter were not to amount to less than 2,554,600 francs. Of this sum Rachel was to receive 1,200,000 francs free of all expenses; her three sisters, 170,000 francs each. As to Raphael, he was to have all he could make after paying expenses.

The least reflection, the least experience of men and things would have shown the weak points of this plan of campaign, and dispelled all illusions. But these children of Israel were so completely carried away, American dollars shone so brightly before their dazzled eyes, they could not perceive how little connection existed between the easy gains made in a foreign land by a singer or a dancer and those made by a tragic actress.

Music, pantomime, and dancing are universally understood and appreciated; they are at home wherever they go. A fine singer, a graceful dancer, exert the same fascination on the audience, whatever may be their nation. To understand them, no interpretation, no preliminary studies are required; their aim is the gratification of the eye and ear only.

It is far otherwise with the tragic actress, who, even in the country whose language she speaks, can only expect constant patronage from a certain class, the *élite* of society, for taste and education are needed to appreciate her art: she offers no

entertainment that can please the masses long; with the crowd curiosity is the chief inducement, and that satisfied, the novelty once gone, the majority seek elsewhere amusements better adapted to their intelligence and associations.

Had Raphael read with discernment the newspaper articles which within the last ten years had most powerfully contributed to exalt and glorify his sister, he would have seen the organs of the press constantly complaining of the indifference shown by the French public for the master-pieces of their own language. Had he known any thing of the history of great dramatic artists, he would have remembered that Talma, the great Talma himself, never, even when in the *apogée* of his fame, attained to the sum of the receipts of the houses brought by Madame Catalani and Madame Malibran. He would have learned that the art of the tragedian is a liberal art, and not a money-making one, exercising its influence on the *élite* and not on the crowd. He may possibly have been led to form his conclusions by the enthusiasm always manifested for his sister in England. He did not consider that she found there a numerous and highly-educated aristocracy; that the gentry—in fact, all the upper classes—are well acquainted with the French language, and familiar with its great authors; that the distance between the two countries permitted of a constant interchange of ideas that rendered the appreciation of French dramatic literature and its interpreters easy.

He did not pause to reflect that in America, though education is far more widely disseminated, it is also more superficial; that this busy nation, while it astonishes the rest of the world by the gigantic advances it makes in all the mechanical arts, by its wonderful inventions in navigation, in agriculture, has had no time as yet to perfect itself in the arts that are less practically useful—no leisure to cultivate the taste for things that to old Europe are necessaries and to young America superfluities.

Had Raphael been guilty of two literary ideas, his wild anticipations of success would have been somewhat tamed by the difference between the French classic drama and the English or Shakspearian, which is also that of the United States. That Madame Ristori should charm even those among the

Parisians who were ignorant of her language is easily accounted for; the subjects of the tragedies she played were, for the most part, familiar to the French public; they were treated and developed in the same manner as their own tragedies; they therefore asked no more than the Italian actress could give them, and that they did not understand they knew intuitively.

It could not be thus in regard to Rachel in America; its citizens were accustomed to dramas in which the tragic and the comic elements, the sublime and the grotesque, the language of royalty and that of the lower classes are all combined and mingled. They do not, even in their own language, like to have that narrated and described that might be put into action before their own eyes. It was not probable that those accustomed to such scenic performances would be entertained by French tragedies — tragedies of Greek and Latin origin, without any variety of scene or style, where the language, always sublime, never unbends, where the *dramatis personæ* never even change their buskins.

The above considerations are, *certes*, not far-fetched, and would have presented themselves to any thinking mind, and, had he reflected, would have dispelled some of the vapors that spread so thick a haze over the brain of Raphael Felix.

A last, and certainly not the least important consideration, was one quite overlooked by the ambitious manager. He forgot, or did not choose to remember, that between him, the improvident and inexperienced youth, ignoring the language, the customs, and manners, the men and things of the country he was going to put to contribution, and Barnum, the famous showman who exhibited Jenny Lind, and whose extraordinary tact, great experience, and well-combined measures in the way of puffs, trumpet-pealed announcements, &c., &c., had so largely influenced her success, there was an immeasurable distance.

From the moment this great project was conceived to that which witnessed its execution, nothing else was thought of, nothing else was cared for. We will not pause to speak of all the attempts made by friends and admirers to dissuade the *tragédienne* from this suicidal design. It was whispered

that inducements of considerable pecuniary value were tried in vain. Among these bits of private gossip, it was said that, in accordance with a wish expressed by the *tragédienne* to possess a set of clasps to complete the superb *parure* of jewels she wore with the costume of *Adrienne Lecouvreur*, the sum of 100,000 francs was offered on condition she would remain in France. This, though a paltry consideration when opposed to the potent one of the expected 1,200,000 francs, was still too important to be slighted. The condition was accepted, the sum was sent; part of it was used for the purchase of the clasps, the remainder prudently added to the mass, and the *tragédienne* remained: the handsome bribe purchased a respite of six months.

It must be owned, however, that it was long before Rachel herself viewed the emigration in the fair colors in which it was pictured by those who had an interest in her going. Such was her irresolution, that, to the very last moment, Raphael trembled lest she should give it up altogether. However, it was said that he had wisely provided against such an emergency, and insured himself in more ways than one against any eventual backsliding. Under color of losses at the Bourse, he borrowed a sum to defray the expenses of a preliminary voyage to America, undertaken to make the arrangements for her reception there. He afterward obtained a second installment for some other preparatory requisite, then again another to advance the month's pay to the actors engaged, for the passage expenses, &c., &c. When he had thus borrowed to the amount of 80 or 100,000 francs, he felt more secure for his own share of compensation.

On the 11th of August all doubt was at an end; Rachel embarked in the Pacific. The countenance of the *tragédienne* wore a heavy cloud. Mute and thoughtful, she seemed to leave the shores of Europe with marked reluctance. It might be that the natural grief of parting with friends had thus saddened her; some of the members of the company suggested that she might be reflecting on M. Dumas's pleasant prediction that, "should Mademoiselle Rachel succumb to climate, fatigue, or disease, like Mademoiselle Sontag, her brother Raphael would make the best of the misfortune by having her

embalmed, and exhibiting the body of Rachel to the Americans, since he could not exhibit her alive."

Her very first day on board was marked by an incident that might well have inspired sad presentiments. One of the passengers, who was far gone in a consumption, died that afternoon. The body was put into a coffin and placed in one of the boats. For the first few days the presence of death cast a gloom on the passengers; for some time, when walking on the deck, they either avoided the side where the body hung in the little boat, or the laugh was hushed, the voice lowered to a whisper, the quick pace slackened as they passed by. But the impression of awe that produced this respect was soon effaced, and the merry chat, the light song, and cheerful laugh were heard, as uncontrolled and free as though that sad memento of what was, is, and will be, to the end of time itself, was no longer there. The mute eloquence of those lips doomed to eternal silence was soon unheeded by the thoughtless crowd, and the poor aunt of the youth was the only one whose countenance retained any trace of sadness.

During the passage Captain Nye presented to his celebrated passenger a superb mahogany box, filled with American perfumery, the gift of a citizen of New York, who wished to remain *incognito*. The gallantry of her unknown admirer did not, however, render the *tragédienne* more cheerful, and she finally chose to remain altogether in her cabin.

The day before the arrival of the Pacific she condescended, however, to make her appearance at the public table. This was the day of what is called the captain's dinner, when Champagne is supplied gratis, and toasts, speeches, and congratulations are made and exchanged. After the usual toasts to the captain and to the ladies, some one proposed the health of Mademoiselle Rachel. So far there was nothing unusual or out of the way in the proceedings, but they did not end here. It occurred to some busy gentleman that the members of the French company would hail with delight an opportunity of singing the "Marseillaise:" probably he thought they were in the habit of singing it night and morning, as some other people are supposed to say their prayers, and with like hopes of a happy result. His expectations were rather dis-

appointed, for the astonishment of those thus unexpectedly called upon was great indeed. The honor was unanimously declined, for the very good reason that not one knew by heart the French national hymn.

No one seemed inclined to make a display of his musical powers, until a gentleman from New Orleans, having devoted himself, Curtius-like, for the good of all, volunteered, on condition the burden of the song should be taken up by all present. The reputation of the French company for patriotism was thus saved. As for the burden, it *was* taken up, and in such guise that, whatever credit the singers deserved for good-will, it was evident there was nothing to boast of in the way of harmony. It was plainly apparent they were nearing a land of liberty, for every man sent forth his voice in the most independent manner, perfectly free from all trammels of time or measure, and utterly careless of his neighbor's performance. At any rate, the result was one that had not always been the case with the belligerent hymn—it ended, not in tears and blood, but in hearty and prolonged merriment.

The close of the voyage was marked by the usual act of conventional generosity which custom has made a law for all artists of European celebrity, and which to neglect would be to peril the expected success. Mademoiselle Rachel remitted to the captain two thousand francs to be distributed among the crew of the Pacific, and eight hundred francs for the Sailors' Orphan Asylum. Thinking this a favorable opportunity, one of the lady-passengers requested the generous *artiste* would give a few scenes from Corneille or Racine for the gratification of all the passengers. Rather surprised at a call for which her experience of English society had not prepared her, the *tragédienne* returned a very positive refusal.

At seven o'clock on the following morning Rachel and her companions landed on the shores of the El Dorado, on which so many hopes were founded. They were received by Mr. Gustave Naquet, the agent of Raphael, who seemed rather annoyed than pleased that the Pacific should have got in so early. The cause was soon explained: preparations had been made to receive *Hermione* with all due honors; a steam-boat was to have brought out her guards—the Lafayette company

of militia, consisting of French citizens of New York—with a band of music playing French tunes, to meet the steamer and greet its celebrated passenger. A number of ladies and gentlemen had been invited to join the party. Great, therefore, was the disappointment when the Pacific, expected at ten o'clock, chose to anticipate the time by three hours, and spoil this little nautical *fête*.

The *tragédienne*, however, seemed rather rejoiced at having escaped the threatened ovation, and congratulated herself on being permitted to disembark quietly, without the annoyance of a gaping crowd escorting her to her hotel. But she was not to be let off so easily; no sooner had she laid her head on the pillow, tired, weary, and glad to think she was once more on *terra firma*, when the persevering Lafayette Guards congregated under her windows and commenced their serenade.

The victim was doomed; there was no help for it but to resign herself with as a good a grace as might be to the infliction. She dressed herself and made her appearance on the balcony. Content with this submission, her tormentors finally permitted her to seek the rest she so greatly needed.

The St. Nicholas, with all its New World splendor, was not the place to suit one accustomed to the quiet comfort and retirement of a European hotel. The very next day found Rachel installed with her younger sisters, Leah and Dinah, in a private boarding-house in Clinton Place. Raphael and the father went to other lodgings, and Sarah chose to reside by herself in another quarter of the town. This division of the family gave rise to numerous conjectures as to the motives that led to it, as though some very potent one were needed for such a measure. The remainder of the company took lodgings wherever it suited their means and convenience.

Preparations were now actively made for the great attack on the pockets of the American citizens, and the manager was soon exceedingly busy carrying out the operations of the siege at his office in Wall Street. A wonderful effect of the desire to make money manifested itself in the quickness with which Raphael made himself sufficiently master of the language of the country for all ordinary purposes. On his arrival he could say but a few sentences; in a few days he could not

only understand all that was said, but make others understand him—*when he chose.* We say when he chose, for it did not always suit Raphael's purpose to be too clear. When Americans who spoke French well attempted to prove their proficiency in that language when applying for seats, or for any other purpose connected with the theatre, the prudent manager preferred replying in broken English, because, as he used to tell the actors, he could not be made responsible for any thing he might be understood to promise—he was liable to make mistakes in a foreign tongue, and to say one thing when he meant another. Thus he found means to evade keeping such engagements as turned out to be against his interests.

On the 3d of September the *tragédienne* made her first appearance on the boards of the Metropolitan Theatre. The play that preceded the tragedy was "Les Droits de l'Homme," which, much as it was liked in Europe, scarcely pleased the majority of the audience, who, not understanding French, and having come expressly to see Rachel, thought the two acts of the comedy interminable. They had, however, to endure, with what patience they possessed, the first act of "Les Horaces" before their curiosity could be satisfied. At length it was *Camille's* turn to come on, and she was greeted with three or four rounds of applause. To one who was accustomed to create an extraordinary sensation wherever she went, and who had been recalled twenty-two times in Vienna, the reception given her by the New-Yorkers seemed but lukewarm. She was, however, warmly applauded, and recalled at the end—not of the tragedy, for it was not all acted—but of the *rôle.* The applause of the European *claque* being wholly unknown in the United States, the *bona fide* expressions of approbation the real public there give is far more valuable, though, perhaps, less violent and prolonged than that of the hired Romans stationed under the lustre of a Parisian theatre.

This first performance produced 26,334 francs, a sum exceeding any one ever made in a single night by any actor in Europe. But it was far below the brilliant expectations that had been founded on the success obtained by Jenny; as long as the singer's gains were the point of comparison, that which would have been thought a very handsome reward dwindled

into insignificance. The Lind's first performance had brought nearly 100,000 francs.

Notwithstanding Raphael's disappointment, he could not improve the situation of affairs; no after performance even attained as high a sum as this first one; and though it will be seen that every one yielded a much larger sum than he could have hoped to realize during a similar tour in any European country, it was nothing to those who had counted on fifty or sixty thousand francs every night.

On the 4th "Phèdre" was given, and another comedy; on the 6th, "Adrienne Lecouvreur." This drama was in America much preferred to any of the classic tragedies, and this was also the case in Europe wherever French was not the language of the country. For those not perfectly familiar with the literature of France, the long speeches in the tragedies of Corneille and Racine must have been exceedingly tiresome. Besides, there is nothing in these to please the eye; the eternal repetition of the same costumes—a few yards of flannel—and of the same decoration. The Greek palace, with its two old red arm-chairs, must invest the whole thing in the eyes of foreigners with the most unendurable monotony; add to these drawbacks the being obliged to follow the author in an execrable translation that has neither rhyme nor reason, that makes the most egregious nonsense of the most eloquent passages, and in which the sublime is grotesque, the pathetic ludicrous; then let the public consist of people who have been too busy money-making all their lives to have had time to study the demigod passions of the Greek and Roman heroes, to have learned to appreciate the simple grandeur, the sculptural purity, the archaic severity of art, and what wonder that it should prefer the brilliant, high-colored melo-drama "Adrienne Lecouvreur," with its change of decoration at each act, its rich costumes? Mademoiselle Rachel and her sister Sarah might have followed the precedent set by Mademoiselle Georges, and had it announced on the bills that they "played with all their diamonds," so dazzlingly were they adorned in "Adrienne."

The pure lines, the still, statuesque beauty that no grief, however violent, must alter, the stern dignity that would dis-

dain to exhibit its agony in exaggerated contortions, the eternal serenity and heroic grace of the tragic muse could have no charms compared with those of the drama, her bastard sister, whose unbridled passions, nervous excitability, and convulsive grief are more in accordance with the *blasé* taste of the day, and delight those who have no time to analyze their sensations, and distinguish truth from fiction.

During Mademoiselle Rachel's stay in New York the yellow fever was raging in Norfolk and Portsmouth with extraordinary violence. Public subscriptions were every where raised to remedy in some measure the misery and destitution that its ravages occasioned. M. Gustave Naquet having represented to the *tragédienne* that it was customary for the stars who levied large taxes on the land to show themselves munificent in such cases as the present, and that the mite she was to contribute must not be under a thousand dollars, she reluctantly consented to make this donation to the families of the victims. The capital thus employed not bringing in the immediate interest she had expected, for the Americans were too much accustomed to such acts to give them the importance she attached to her spontaneous gift, it was soon regretted, and she reproached her adviser quite bitterly, saying, "Well, what good have my 5000 francs done me? Just money thrown away."

In the mean while the ever-busy Lafayette Guards took it into their wise heads that Mademoiselle Rachel should sing them the "Marseillaise." They had no particular reason to give for the wish. Because she had sung it for the gratification of the Parisian populace of 1848, it did not follow that the citizens of New York should take any particular delight in it. The difference of time, place, people, opportunity, were considerations totally overlooked by these exacting gentlemen. Perhaps they imagined the demand proved their nationality.

Whatever their motives, they would give the *tragédienne* no rest until she had consented to their whim. It must be owned that they had some little trouble in obtaining what they asked, Mademoiselle Rachel refusing at first on very good grounds. As an apology for her reluctance, she sent the following letter, alleging inability, to her exacting countrymen.

The letter was republished in France as a justification, inasmuch as it proved she had complied only after much hesitation; but it scarcely accomplished the desired object, Jules Janin insisting she should have said she "would not" instead of "she could not;" she should have declined point-blank in lieu of pleading want of voice.

"DEAR COUNTRYMEN,—It is seven years since I have sung the 'Marseillaise;' at the time I did sing it I had voice, and my health was still young. Now I am often exhausted after the play; I should, therefore, really fear to injure the interests of others should I increase my fatigues.

"You may believe in the deep regret I feel in not daring to promise what you desire of me, when I tell you I loved to sing the 'Marseillaise' as I love to act my finest part in Corneille.

"Believe me, dear countrymen, &c., &c., RACHEL.

"New York, September 8th, 1855."

But the Guards were not to be thus discouraged; and finally, on the 28th of September, having, after the evening's performance, repaired to her residence and given her a serenade with accompaniment of vociferations for the "Marseillaise," they obtained a solemn promise from Raphael that the "Marseillaise" would very shortly constitute a part of the evening's entertainment offered by Mademoiselle Rachel to the theatre-going public. As for singing it on a balcony for the gratification of a non-paying street audience, the *tragédienne* could never have been made to understand that such a thing was expected of her.

The announcement of this extra performance was, however, very injurious to the receipts of the intervening ones—people waited for the song-night.

It came at last; on the 8th of October the bills announced the longed-for "Marseillaise."

But in the interval that had elapsed between the promise and its realization, a terrible blow had been struck at the foundation of the delicate constitution that required so much care and received so little. There was either a tendency from

birth to pulmonary disease, or the seeds had been sown in early youth, when poverty entailed insufficient clothing and frequent exposure to the inclement weather. Rachel, when at the Conservatoire, had suffered from a complaint of the larynx that frequently ends in consumption. Now, however, the mischief, long dormant, was suddenly developed by negligence. A grand religious festival having occurred among the Hebrews of New York, Rachel was invited. Ignorant of the treacherous nature of the climate and its sudden vicissitudes, she had dressed herself in accordance with the mildness of the day. On her return home, however, there was a complete change; a sharp east wind prevailed, and the consequence was she caught a violent cold. From that moment her doom was sealed, for subsequent carelessness rooted the evil.

In the evening she went to a *soirée* at the house of M. de Tropbriand, the talented editor of the "Courier des Etats Unis," to whom the French were indebted for very excellent articles on their performances. This second imprudence aggravated the mischief done in the morning.

On the night, then, that the "Marseillaise" was to be given, Rachel was ill-disposed to sing; but the audience had assembled chiefly for the purpose of hearing it, and she had no choice; as long as they saw she could act, they took it for granted she could sing.

The effect of the "Marseillaise" in New York was nothing compared to that produced in 1848, and it could not be otherwise. In Paris the house was filled with an excited multitude, who heard and saw through the medium of their own feelings, and whom it required little exertion to raise to a pitch of enthusiasm that reacted more or less on the actress: there was no such stimulant in America, where the hymn of "Rouget de l'Isle" could awake no dormant passions, and, in fact, could have in itself no more real interest for the audience than any other song. Mademoiselle Rachel had never had any voice for singing, and still less ear; she could keep neither time nor tune; the orchestra of the Théâtre Français was aware of these deficiencies of *la grande tragédienne*, whom Nature had never designed for a *cantatrice*, and when she chose to step out of her sphere it took care to supply them; she did

not sing to the music, the music followed her *melopœia*, dissembled, covered the defective points, and not unfrequently anticipated and prevented too discordant ones. She and the orchestra were old acquaintances, and had practiced the thing together often. But here she was in the presence of musicians who thought she knew how to sing, and therefore played according to rule, leaving her often at a distance, or finding her start on before; they performed a tune while she chanted a sort of recitation without much of any. Add to this disadvantage that of a want of inclination, a cold on her chest, a cold audience, and the effect could scarcely be very exhilarating.

The spectators gave her credit for her compliance, if not for her skill, by applauding very courteously. The esteem in which they really held the performance was made apparent by the difference of the receipts when it was given the second time. On the first night it brought 21,299 francs. When it was repeated, some days after, there was a decrease of over one fourth in the receipts, which only amounted to 15,267 francs.

The benefit of Mademoiselle Rachel proved attractive, and consequently remunerative, though she gave one of her worst plays, "Jeanne d'Arc." She again performed the "Marseillaise," and Madame Lagrange sung the grand air from "I Puritani." The result was 22,128 francs.

Though much troubled with her cough, such was Rachel's impatience to finish her engagement in America, that she played four nights in succession. She had private reasons—*private*, inasmuch as they did not concern the public at large, but not secret, for she did not hesitate to speak very openly on the subject—for her eagerness to return to France.

From New York the French company went to Boston—not the best climate to cure coughs—and on the 23d gave "Les Horaces." Mademoiselle Rachel continued to perform in succession on the 24th, 25th, 26th, and 27th. The success obtained in Boston was far more brilliant, considering the numerical difference in the population, than in New York.

At this juncture there was a little reaction, caused by an attempt to obtain higher prices for certain seats than those

mentioned on the bills, and the rather cavalier way in which the press, so omnipotent in the United States, was treated by Raphael Felix. Whether the fault was really in the manager, or whether, as he asserted, it was attributable to outside speculators, with which he had nothing to do, the consequences fell on him; for, though Mademoiselle Rachel appeared in two pieces on the same night—"Polyeucte" and "Le Moineau de Lesbie"—they brought only some 4000 francs. Satisfactory explanations having been given and the evils complained of remedied, the breach was healed, and the public restored its favor to the French company.

By a curious coincidence, while Mademoiselle Rachel was giving the "Adrienne Lecouvreur" of Messrs. Scribe and Legouvé to the Bostonians, Miss Eliza Logan was playing an apocryphal *Adrienne* in a play translated, or rather "Anglicized with variations," from the French drama, and entitled "The Youth of Marshal Saxe."

On the 2d of November the tragedy of "Virginie," and, "by request," the "Marseillaise," were given for the benefit of Mademoiselle Rachel, on which occasion many of the students of Cambridge, wishing to obtain a better view of the *tragédienne*, came on the stage as supernumeraries. All the French in Boston, the majority of whom were workmen, were in the house that evening; of course, the success of the "Marseillaise" was very great, that portion of the audience having some affinity with the public Mademoiselle Rachel had chanted it to in 1848. This was her last night in Boston.

---

## CHAPTER XXXI.

1856.

Return to New York.—Jules Janin in the Field again.—Philadelphia.—*Le Commencement de la Fin.*—Little Family Jars.—Charleston.—The last Performance.—Maurice.—Havana.

WHILE the *tragédienne* was electrifying all the French pretenders to ultra-Republicanism in the American cities, the news of this revival of by-gone mummeries had reached Paris, and rekindled the wrath of her *quondam* admirer, Jules Janin,

who, in a very eloquent article, fulminated his anathema, not on the originators of the sin, but on those who were most innocent of it. He censured with more severity and spirit than strict justice the American nation as having asked for a revolutionary French hymn never perhaps thought of by them, and which was to the Frenchmen who did request it solely a reminiscence of their own land. His article, making all allowance for the exaggerations into which his anger hurried him, was ably written, and annoyed Mademoiselle Rachel the more as, although full of praises of her, it spoke of her expedition as a complete failure.

On the 6th of November the French company again commenced its performances in New York. The first was "Adrienne Lecouvreur," followed, on the 8th, by "Lady Tartuffe," but the disadvantages of the house were such that the receipts were not over half the usual sums. The next performances were given at Niblo's little theatre, and proved more lucrative.

On the 17th Mademoiselle Rachel bade farewell to the New Yorkers in "Phèdre" and "Le Moineau de Lesbie." An ode, written for the occasion by M. de Trobriand, Rachel à l'Amerique, was recited by the *tragédienne*, and received with hearty applause by the audience.

From New York the company proceeded to Philadelphia, where, in an evil hour, Mademoiselle Rachel made her appearance at the Walnut Street Theatre, in "Les Horaces," on the 19th. The house had not been warmed! This piece of unpardonable neglect on the part of somebody was fatal to Mademoiselle Rachel, whose cough had continued from the day she caught cold in the Synagogue. It was a cold November evening, and the atmosphere of the house, damp and raw, was worse than that of the open street. Mademoiselle Rachel's hacking cough was painful to hear, and she looked wretchedly pale as she sat, wrapped up in her shawl, waiting in the slips her turn to come on. The result of this was, that she was unable to rise the next day, and remained ill during all the time she was in that town.

This was the commencement of Raphael's discomfiture. So far, if the reality had not equaled his wild expectations, it had

consisted of such solid, substantial profits as would have satisfied any reasonable hopes. From New York his sister had already sent to France 300,000 francs of her gains, including her London receipts, and he himself 60,000 francs. The few drawbacks that had occurred had proceeded from his own mismanagement. In his eagerness to make money rapidly, he had curtailed the privileges of the press, infringed the laws and customs of the country he was in, quarreled with his agent, and, on the whole, proved himself but an indifferent showman. Besides these outside troubles there were little domestic jars, inevitable in a family where the tempers were so various and some of them so violent, and where the several members had become accustomed to a perfectly independent and uncontrolled life.

It was more especially between Raphael and Sarah that dissensions were wont to arise; but, although a furious quarrel would at times spring up from the most insignificant causes, it seldom lasted. On one occasion, some little misunderstanding having occurred during a rehearsal, there was a terrible falling out between them, the brother intrenching himself behind his authority as manager, and the sister setting it at naught in the most defiant manner. Sarah knew no bounds when in a passion, and her language was then more apt to savor of her earlier career than was quite befitting her present position; nor were the ears of her adversaries always safe from substantial buffets as well as angry words. After a very violent interchange of epithets neither fraternal nor complimentary, during which the manager maintained himself at a respectful distance from his refractory actress, she declared she would tear up her engagement, to which the reply was that nothing could give him greater pleasure. Accordingly, the document was sent back in a dozen pieces. No one seemed to think the country was in danger, or that the interest of the French company would be severely damaged by the loss of the retiring member. Raphael was exultant, and Rachel in a state of great hope that Sarah would fulfill her threat and take herself back to Europe; at the same time she was in great perplexity, for she dared not say she wished her off, lest Sarah should stay to spite her; nor could she venture to tell

her to stay, lest she should allow herself to be advised. When Sarah, therefore, came in hot haste to make her complaints, she took a middle course, condoled with her griefs, said it was too bad—there was no living with Raphael—concluding with, "At any rate, dear, you shall not go penniless; I'll let you have six thousand francs to help you to return, &c., &c."

Meanwhile "Lady Tartuffe" was to be performed the next night, and of course Sarah, who played the countess, was out of the question. Raphael, too, in the heat of the quarrel, would not change the announcement, counting on Mademoiselle Durey, a very intelligent actress, who had played the part often, in the most able manner, when with Rachel on other tours. Mademoiselle Durey replied she was ready to play the part, but that, her salary not permitting her to own so expensive a wardrobe as Mademoiselle Sarah, she had no dress befitting the occasion. Anxious to prove to the delinquent how well he could get along without her, Raphael offered, if the dress could be got ready in time, he would pay for it. Mademoiselle Durey, in a great fright lest the loving relatives should get reconciled before she had secured this munificent gift, posted to Stewart's, selected a splendid moire antique, exacted a solemn vow of the dressmaker to bring it at the appointed hour, and awaited in great trepidation the result.

"My forebodings proved true," quoth Mademoiselle Durey; "they did make it up, and Sarah played the countess, but the dress was in time; it had been cut and fitted for me, so Raphael had to pay the 500 francs it had cost. I was still fearful to the last that it would be taken from me and altered for Leah or Dinah, they being shorter than I."

Rachel, though often the cause of strife, seldom allowed herself to quarrel. She invariably preserved the quiet dignity we have so frequently had occasion to mention. She dreaded any thing like a scene. She had brought with her from Europe a second waiting-maid, a great, awkward, raw-boned virago, called Eleonore, who had been a cook all her life, and was entirely ignorant of the duties of the elevated station Mademoiselle Rachel, for private reasons, had promoted her to. Between this useless supernumerary and the faithful old

Rose there existed great jealousy. Rose felt that while she had all the supervision and care of her mistress's wardrobe and toilet, this interloper, who did nothing, was being petted and made much of. The strife grew so violent that Mademoiselle Rachel was obliged to separate the rivals, and send Rose to live at the hotel where the members of the company resided: there she continued her duty of attending to her costumes, &c., but Eleonore remained attached to her own person. This piece of injustice was dictated by the feeling that rendered her so impatient to return to Europe. The woman to whom she gave the preference over the attached creature that had been with her from the beginning of her career was the servant of a friend she had left behind, and for whom she openly professed an affection she had never felt for any one before. She had taken of her own accord this coarse cook-maid into her service at a salary of 150 francs monthly, in order to have a witness of her truth and constancy, and there was no kindness she did not lavish on this woman to secure her favorable report.

Poor Rose cried from morning to night, and excited the sympathy of the two younger sisters, Leah and Dinah. The latter, one day, expressing herself rather harshly with regard to Rachel's treatment of Rose, Sarah, who was present, took the matter up so hotly on the opposite side that Dinah could not play for a day or two after in consequence of the impression her sister's arguments had made on her face.

All these little bickerings, however, though frequent, did not interfere with the general prosperity of the French company. Every one but the Felixes was satisfied with the prospect of continued success. In a letter from one of the members to a friend in Paris, we find the following under date of October 29th:

"We are playing every day. I am obliged to own I fear we shall see you again too soon; the success of our *grande tragédienne* is such I really think she will make her 1,200,400 francs before the nine months are elapsed."

In another, dated the 14th of November, the same correspondent remarks:

"They say in Paris we make no money. We do not real-

ize 30,000 francs a night; but Mademoiselle Rachel has already remitted to France 300,000 francs, including the last receipts of the London performances. She has to come to the United States very reluctantly, for, as she says herself, she loves for the first time, and she has only resigned herself to the sacrifice she makes in leaving France for the *sake of her family*. Let us hope this feeling will preponderate over the first, and that we shall not see France again before next June."

The state of Rachel's health precluding her from reappearing before the Philadelphians, and the physicians having advised an immediate removal to a warmer climate, the company gave four performances without her. English plays were performed on the same evenings by the English company, but the plan met with so little favor that the receipts did not amount to a thousand francs a night. The house had been rented for ten performances, and had to be paid in any case. The same thing occurred with regard to all the theatres that had been engaged beforehand, and the amount thus spent did not average less than 20,000 francs for the cities of the United States, and 50,000 francs for the Havana theatre.

It was during Mademoiselle Rachel's forced seclusion in Philadelphia that the report of her death, with the most circumstantial account of her last moments, went the rounds of the American papers, and finally traveled to Europe, where it was republished in all its most minute details. When the subject of this wretched joke heard of it, she was more amused than vexed.

It was finally decided that the company should go at once to Charleston. Much was hoped from the climate there; but Rachel herself would have willingly returned immediately to France. With her this was now the ruling passion, and it was more than once feared she would start by the next steamer, and leave her brother to settle his affairs as he chose.

On the 27th, Mademoiselle Rachel, her father, and her sister Sarah, anticipating by a few hours the departure of the other members of the company, left Philadelphia. The invalid traveled by shorter stages, so that, although she had preceded her companions, she arrived after them. The first

performance, consisting, as usual when she did not play, of comedies, was given without her on the 10th of December, and was not very numerously attended. It was every where the same, the attraction was Rachel; they wished to see the idol Europe had so long worshiped, not a French play they could not understand. As for Raphael, convinced that the health of his sister would now be completely restored, he took this opportunity to go on to Havana and make the necessary arrangements for her reception there.

There was in Charleston a French doctor whose skill was highly spoken of; he was sent for by Mademoiselle Rachel, and his only advice was that she should maintain herself in a state of absolute repose for six months. This was the only thing she needed, but it was a *sine qua non* condition of health. This, however, the patient rejected as an utter impossibility. Her cough continued very troublesome, but her strength and general health being slightly improved, she was bent on performing, and her reappearance was announced to take place on the 17th instant, in the part of *Adrienne Lecouvreur*.

This doctor was probably the first person who really saw the danger in which the *tragédienne* stood even then. Her illness was spoken of as an affection of the larynx, but the lungs were attacked already, and the utmost care and prudence was required; but when she had resolved on any thing, it was not easy to dissuade her from it. Play she would, and play she did—for the last time in America the bills said—for the last time on earth said implacable Destiny.

M. Chery, who played in the drama the part of *Michonnet*, the noble old stage-manager, was greatly shocked by the change he saw in the once-brilliant *Adrienne*. A niece of his had died of the fatal disease, the symptoms of which he clearly recognized in Rachel. The last scene of the play contains passages but too allusive to the doom she has since so cruelly realized.

"Ah, quelles souffrances . . . . ce n'est plus ma tête, c'est ma poitrine qui est brulante . . . . . j'ai là comme un brazier . . . comme un feu dévorant qui me consume—

"Ah! le mal redouble. . . . . Vous qui m'aimez

tant, sauvez moi, secourez moi . . . . je ne veux pas mourir! . . . à présent je ne veux pas mourir—

"Mon Dieu! exaucez-moi! . . Mon Dieu! laissez moi vivre . . . . quelque jours encore . . . . Je suis si jeune et la vie s'ouvrait pour moi si belle!

"La vie! . . la vie! . . Vains efforts! . . . . vaine prière! . . . . mes jours sont comptes! je sens les forces et l'existence qui m'échappent!

"O triomphes du théâtre! mon cœur ne battra plus de vos ardentes émotions! . . Et vous, longues études d'un art que j'aimais tant, rien ne restera de vous après moi . . . Rien ne nous survit à nous autres . . rien que le souvenir."

Hearing her utter, with all the eloquence of truth, these heart-rending phrases, in which the dying actress clings so despairingly to the life ebbing away so rapidly, these passionate regrets of the triumphs of a career cut short so early, M. Chery was deeply impressed with the imminence of the peril. He could not divest himself of the terrible thought that the death she was imitating was really in her, mocking the mocker!

"We have seen Rachel act for the last time," said he to a friend.

When Raphael went to Havana on the 4th, he wished to take Maurice with him. Maurice was a fine young man, with whom he had become acquainted on board the Pacific, when he made his preparatory trip to America. Pleased with this youth's manners and address, Raphael had brought him back to France, and he now filled the post of ticket-taker and interpreter in the company. An indisposition, which afterward proved to be the small-pox, prevented his accompanying the manager to Havana. On the ninth day the poor fellow died.

Every one regretted Maurice, he was so obliging and kind; as for Mademoiselle Rachel, she liked him very much, and had promised to establish him in some sort of business before the end of the *congé*. His death was therefore carefully concealed from her, lest it should cause too great an impression in her weak state, and on leaving Charleston she wrote to him who was past all earthly joys and sorrows.

The letter concluded with these words:

"Adieu, my dear Maurice: I am firmly convinced we shall soon meet again."

The incident is related by Mademoiselle Durey in the correspondence already referred to.

"Her father, Mademoiselle Briard, and I, had dined with her that evening, and she read us the letter she was writing to comfort poor Maurice, whom we have to leave behind us, she said; the last lines of it sent a chill to our hearts. We could not help thinking they were prophetic of the writer's own approaching death."

The news of Raphael's progress in Havana being of the most exhilarating nature, the company embarked on the 19th instant for that city. The Havaneros, too enthusiastic with regard to the fine arts not to be electrified at the idea of possessing in their own town the *grande tragédienne*, had subscribed *en masse*. There could not be a doubt that the greatest success would attend her if she performed; unfortunately, the last point was very uncertain. It was hoped, however, that when she had recovered from the fatigues of the voyage she would improve.

Every physician that was called in agreed in saying that rest was indispensable. If climate could be of any avail, she certainly had the benefit of the mildest winter quarters in the world, yet she did not seem to get better, and the period of her announced appearance was indefinitely adjourned.

This state of things was extremely annoying to the hapless manager, who saw before him a wretched prospect: the idea of having to refund all the bright doubloons and fair dollars that had passed into his possession was cruel indeed.

As for the Havaneros, their impatience soon made them irritable, and they declared their utter disbelief in the alleged cause of delay. That Rachel could not play for them, when they knew she had played a few days previous in Charleston —the thing was absurd, and all the blame was laid to caprice. By way of revenge, one of the leading papers, "La Preusa," commenced the publication of M. Mirecourt's biography of Rachel, translated into Spanish, to the infinite vexation of the *tragédienne*.

Nor were the Havaneros alone to deem themselves fooled.

Unfortunately, Rachel had so much accustomed all who knew her to feigned indispositions during the course of her theatrical career, whenever it suited her convenience, that now the members of the company could not be brought to believe her as ill as she really was. Her own family long doubted the serious nature of her illness. Knowing how interested her relatives were in her health for their own sakes, she had sometimes, in France, frightened her mother by complaining of just the kind of symptoms she knew to be those of consumption. Even when subsequently she was sent to reside in Egypt, few in France believed her ill. She paid the penalty of former deceptions.

The first performance was to have been given on the 25th of December; it was postponed to the 6th of January, her physician having peremptorily required the delay. The *tragédienne* herself was exceedingly disappointed; while the public murmured and her companions accused her, she was suffering acutely in mind and body. She removed to a house belonging to M. Marty, the manager of the Havana theatre, and, secluding herself entirely, refused to see even her relatives, on whom she laid the blame of having brought her from France on this injudicious expedition. She declared that all the company should leave for Europe, and that she would remain behind, keeping only Mademoiselles Briard and Durey, and her faithful old Rose. It was her intention, as soon as she got better, to perform detached scenes, in which she meant the two actresses should assist her. She would have none of her relatives remain with her; they must all go back to France.

This misanthropic fit lasted ten days, during which the two ladies mentioned were alone admitted to see her. At last she allowed herself to be persuaded that her wisest course would be to return to Paris, where she could have every resource of medical art; it was agreed that every one, excepting Rachel, was to sail for New York on the 8th of January, and thence for Europe on the 19th.

When this decision was announced, great was the disappointment of the actors, and with good reason, for, from the day the notice was given, all salaries ceased. Mademoiselles Durey and Briard, acting upon the idea Mademoiselle Rachel's

proposal had suggested, resolved to remain and try their fortunes there, since they were so far from home. Having mentioned this to Rachel, she highly approved of their plan, and promised her support.

"Go to New York," said she; "I will pay your expenses thither; my brother must give you the amount of your fare back to Europe; that sum will enable you to live until you can carry out your plan. You will have letters of credit and recommendation from me to use in case of failure. Write me all particulars; you will always find me ready to assist you; you are the only disinterested friends I have met with in my life." She cautioned them not to mention to their companions her good intentions.

When the two adventurous ladies went to Raphael for their passage-money there was quite a commotion among the other members of the company.

"What were they going to do in America?"

"Going to act, of course."

The example was contagious—all would stay; the next day half had repented; then again only four would remain; on the eve of sailing there were but the two proposers of the scheme and the hair-dresser still firm in the resolve; and on the 8th, when the vessel left, the two ladies only embarked, steadfastly resisting all efforts made to dissuade them.

The real motive for the apparent fickleness of the other actors was the opposition their plan met with from Raphael. When the Havaneros found they were not to hear Rachel, they expressed a wish to see at least the other members of the company, and the latter, nothing loth, as they were no longer receiving a salary, proposed giving a series of performances without the co-operation of the *tragédienne*. The manager, who intended returning the following year at the head of a company, fearing that the novelty would be over if the present scheme took effect, refused to permit of it.

At first there was a strong tendency to resistance; they would remain and give a series of pieces in three acts, requiring seven performers at most. The far-off yellow fever at last conquered, and they thought they had better not lose their passage-money.

Rachel had at first announced her resolution to remain. On the eve of the day her comrades were to leave she had changed her mind, and was going also. The next day she had again altered it, and would remain. The Clyde finally sailed without her.

The ladies already mentioned were not the only ones who remained in America. Sarah Felix left in the Isabel for Charleston on the morning the Clyde sailed for New York; she did not return to Europe for some time.

Rachel had taken it into her head she would return to Europe in the same vessel that brought her out, the ill-fated Pacific that was then expected in New York, but which was never heard of. It was not until the 28th of January, 1856, that she returned to France.

Thus ended this disastrous trip—disastrous, be it understood, with regard to its results on the health of the *tragédienne*, but not, all things considered, in a pecuniary view. The fact that the forty-two performances given by Mademoiselle Rachel produced a sum total of 684,033 francs—her share alone amounting to 298,000 francs—sufficiently proves that the citizens of the United States paid their tribute to dramatic art with more liberality than any other nation, and that they were far from deserving the violent diatribe fulminated against them by M. Jules Janin in his *feuilleton* entitled "Rachel and Tragedy in the United States."

However, the best answer the Americans can make is to be found in the still more virulent reproaches the same critic had addressed to his own countrymen on the subject of classic art on a former occasion, when a fit of spleen or of gout had soured his temper.

## CHAPTER XXXII.

1856.

Meulan.—Hotel Rachel.—Household Gods put up at Auction.—Value set upon *Souvenirs*.—Ingenious Cicerones.—A Mother's Letter.—Dear-bought Absence.—Washington's Grandson.—A new Claim on the Théâtre Français.—Return from Egypt.—Sojourn in Montpellier.—Rachel's Children.

We have now before us the melancholy task of narrating the last two years of a life hitherto so agitated, so brilliant, and so busy, but which was now drawing to its close in obscurity and pain—two years, during which alternations of hope and fear incidental to the deceptive nature of her disease, and the anxieties of a mother who anticipates the day when her children will be left to the care and protection of comparative strangers, had succeeded to the intoxicating triumphs that had hitherto marked her days.

From the day she set foot on the Continent Rachel had but one thought, one desire, one aim—life! Her time was spent in vain struggles to dislodge the enemy that had gained possession of the very stronghold of vitality, in disputing every breath to the heavy hand that was oppressing the weak chest; one day lulled into security by some favorable symptom, the next feeling herself within the shadow of the tomb, yet, in truth, nearing with hourly-increased rapidity the fatal goal. For twenty-two months, and until within a few days—we might say hours—of her death, she continued to hope against every probability.

And yet the recollection of the fate of Rebecca, whose illness she had studied in all its phases, might well have discouraged her from the first moment she perceived in herself the same fatal symptoms.

She spent the spring of this year, 1856, at a friend's residence in Meulan, but on the approach of autumn, in pursuance of the advice of the physicians, she resolved to pass the winter on the Nile.

It was reported on this occasion that the *tragédienne*, disgusted with the enthusiasm manifested for Madame Ristori, never intended returning to France. The announcement that her town residence was for sale, which was published shortly after her departure, seemed to confirm this resolution of perpetual exile. A *few* words on this hotel, of which such marvels were related, may not be amiss here. On the announcement of the sale, the French periodicals were seized with a sudden phrensy of admiration, grief, enthusiasm, and despair. All that could be said on the immense loss Paris was about to sustain in the person of the owner, and on the immense value of the dwelling and its contents, was exhausted. Those who thus took on themselves the *rôle* of auctioneers, to puff and cry up the goods and chattels of the *tragédienne*, seemed to wish to show the world how low their venal adulation could stoop. But the result was only partially attained. All Paris hastened to satisfy the curiosity excited by the pompous descriptions of the improvised Robinses, and all Paris was disappointed. The domestic curiosity-shop was pronounced to be such a collection as might be found equaled by the contents of almost any well-appointed private dwelling, and the temple itself a tasteless, commonplace affair, more remarkable for defects than beauties.

The Hotel Rachel, situated on the street to which the *echevin* Trudon gave his not very euphonious name, can not boast of the prospect its windows command. On one side they overlook a large boarding-school, on the other the garden of M. Mirés. The present building was erected at Mademoiselle Rachel's desire by Charles Duval, the architect who has since constructed the celebrated Grande Café Parisien. The defects already referred to were inevitable where so serious a difficulty as that of want of space existed; he was desired to place an elegant and comfortable mansion on a surface of a little over 200 yards. The plans had been approved by Mademoiselle Rachel on the eve of one of her *congés*, and the price having been fixed at 60,000 francs, she left him to execute them. Her tour that year proving very productive, she wrote to the friend to whom she had left the charge of overlooking progress, and authorized any additional expense the

architect might deem necessary; the consequence was, the 60,000 francs swelled into 200,000 francs, a price no one would think of giving for the residence.

The house that had originally stood on this site was of much more simple aspect: Mademoiselle Rachel had occupied it when she removed from No. 10 Rue de Rivoli, celebrated as having been the residence of Mademoiselle Mars before she occupied her own hotel, Rue La Rochefoucault. The predilection of Mademoiselle Rachel for this spot arose from her son Alexandre having been born there; and though it had only been intended for a temporary residence, she chose to remain there against the advice of her friends, who suggested the Champs Elysées as far preferable.

The present building consists in a ground floor, an *entresol*, a first floor, and attics, and the whole presents a singular confusion of all the different styles in architecture. The ground floor, or *rez de chaussez*, is divided into a vestibule, a porter's lodge, and a little parlor, where admirers not admitted to see the divinity of the temple inscribed their names. The architect was so cramped for room that he put the stables in the cellar. Up a Gothic-arched staircase, as dark as a pocket, and so narrow there is no room for a moderate-sized crinoline, the benighted visitor gropes his way to the *entresol*, and here the suite of rooms commences.

An insigpificant ante-chamber leads into a dining-room, ornamented and furnished in very questionable taste. The intention was that the Etruscan should have prevailed, but it was never carried out. The heterogeneous articles it contained were severally meant to denote archaism and erudition, but seemed rather astonished at being brought together. A wainscot of the Middle Ages looked down upon a modern carpet; Greco-Roman paintings and Renaissance *bahuts*, Etruscan vases and Parisian crystals, were unceremoniously associated. The whole was lighted up by an odd-looking lamp, of no particular age, style, or beauty. The room itself was a sort of narrow passage, with so low a ceiling that a man of ordinary height was inclined to stoop as he entered.

On the other side of the ante-chamber a door led into a small *salon* hung in chintz. Among other things, it contained a

glass-doored piece of furniture filled with knick-knacks, in which large sums had been invested; every rarity had been collected in this toy-receptacle; Liliputian statuettes, diminutive Chinese monsters, and costly fancies of all sorts were there. Yet, with the exception of a small marble bust of the First Consul, chiseled by Canova, there was not an article in the room that indicated a taste for the truly beautiful.

The library adjoining the *salon* is, as might be expected, the smallest room in the house. The oak panels, wainscot, &c., are finely carved, but the books, splendidly bound, and each in its place, looking as if it had never been read, gave the room a cold aspect.

On the first floor are the reception rooms and bed-chambers.

Two muses—Melpomene and Thalia, exiled in the antechamber, seemed to protest against the ungratefulness of the mistress who forgot that without them she never would have had a *salon*. Some excuse for her might have been found in the little artistic beauty of these representatives of tragedy and comedy.

The Louis XIV. *salon* was gorgeous and costly, and that was all that could be said in its praise. The curtains were of embroidered cashmere. The chairs and sofas, richly carved and gilt, were covered with crimson silk damask. Each piece bore, carved in a shield, the initial R.; though there were a number of pieces, the set sold for only 2100 francs—not over half its value. The panels and wainscot were highly gilded. The clock and six candelabra, though master-pieces of Denières, only brought 4500 francs. Nothing in this room, so magnificently furnished, spoke of the inner life of the woman—nothing bore the impress of the *artiste;* the upholsterer had worked busily and lavishly, and the furniture was such as might have been ordered by any rich stock-broker. Nothing wore the stamp of an exceptional and privileged being. There was not a bronze, not a marble, not a picture of any value.

Between the *salon* and the bed-rooms was the so-called Chinese boudoir, a closet some six feet square, and so dark that, until the eye became familiarized with its gloom, it could discern nothing. The scant light admitted through the ceiling was lessened by stained glass that was not at all Chinese.

The ornaments of this dark closet were four or five Chinese figures and a Pekin lantern. Among these grotesque mandarins was placed—how appropriately the reader may imagine—a portrait of Rebecca, a lock of her hair in a black frame, and a fine marble bust of Christ, around the throat of which was wound the rosary that has already been mentioned.

The best bed-chamber was also magnificently gilded. The furniture was Louis XV. and of rosewood, with medallions of Sèvres. The superb bed, in *marqueterie*, adorned with gilt bronze ornaments, the owner had slept in but seldom. It was sold for 1000 francs.

In one of the rooms hung the portraits of old Madame Felix and her husband, looking as though they were making an estimate of what the box of toys would bring.

As this is not an auctioneer's catalogue, we shall omit the rooms held of less importance; one of the latter, however, would have been well worth a chapter to itself, could the history of its contents be faithfully recorded. This was Rose's room.

In the vestibule of the Théâtre Français there is always a bust of the reigning power. When a revolution brings about a change, the dethroned majesty is hurried up into the attic, and its place is filled by the image of the new idol. The old busts are not disposed of or destroyed, they are merely kept out of sight; there is no knowing what may happen, and, in case of a restoration, it might be economical and handy to have the old image all ready.

It was probably with this example before her eyes, and in accordance with the same principle, that the busts and portraits of intimate friends, after having had their day in the most conspicuous and honorable place in the *tragédienne's* elegant rooms, afterward ascended to the maid's dormitory. Rose had, at last, quite a gallery, of which the history might have afforded us a glance into the hidden recesses of the feminine heart.

The hotel was to have been sold on the 25th of November, 1856, but, at the eleventh hour, M. Emile de Girardin, to whom Rachel had delegated her powers, countermanded it. The numerous puffs had not had the success expected, and as

the little excitement manifested by the public made it probable no very liberal offers would be made, the speculation was given up for the time. A sale of a portion of the furniture took place in July, 1857, at very low prices. The remainder of the furniture was removed to the apartment Mademoiselle Rachel had taken, Place Royale.

Among the articles sold for much less than their real value were some fine paintings. An authentic Boucher (*La Toilette*) went for 200 francs. "L'Ecu de France," an original of Eugène Isabey, brought but 660 francs. The "Trial of Mary Stuart," a fine composition by Achille Deveria, was given for 705 francs. Two real Diaz, presented by M. Arsène Houssaye to the *tragédienne*, were actually allowed to go for 360 francs. Two fine paintings, representing "Music and Comedy," by Natlier, only brought 600 francs.

A "Virgin and Child," in water-colors, after Van Dyck, by Madame O'Connell, that had cost M. le Comte Leopold Lehon 800 francs, sold for only 350 francs; "Le Triomphe de Mademoiselle Duclos," by Rigaud, 150 francs only.

Among the works of art was an exquisite portrait of Adrienne Lecouvreur, in Beauvais tapestry, a most excellent imitation of a fine painting, and which had been a great favorite with the *tragédienne*, yet she allowed of its being sold for 150 francs. Certainly the possessor of millions could know nothing of that peremptory need that brings under the hammer the most valued articles, yet these fine pictures, all presents from those who were or had been friends, were allowed to go for prices infinitely below their value, as though the owner found herself reduced to the utmost penury.

When the hotel of the Rue Trudon was built, some ten years ago, the next thing was to furnish it suitably. *Hermione* said to her friends, "Contribute something to the adorning of my little hotel—a trifle, a *souvenir*." Every one hastened to prove his taste or his liberality; one sent a china vase, another a *statuette*, another a painting, &c., &c.

Had these friends chosen, they might have bought back their valued and valuable *souvenirs* at public auction. These various contributions were estimated at 300,000 francs.

When the hotel was first announced for sale, several hund-

reds of persons daily visited it. Those who manifested the greatest curiosity to see the inmost recesses of the muse's private dwelling were foreigners, who were not aware that tickets to view were to be had on application to M. Lemonnyer, the notary. Some ingenious speculator, having procured a number of these tickets, repaired to the hotels most frequented by strangers, and offered them at prices varying according to the dupe, from 2 francs to 20 francs, at the same time volunteering his services as *cicerone*. An American was firmly convinced he had seen the portraits of Talma and Mademoiselle Mars, painted by David, the likeness of Father and Mother Felix having been dubbed with these illustrious names by his guide. Another enthusiastic gentleman offered an additional louis to be allowed a sight of the historical guitar.

Mademoiselle Rachel had left France on her way to Egypt on the 2d of October. The following letter to her son, dated from Cairo, the 18th of the same month, is interesting, not only from the maternal feeling that dictated it, but also from the particulars it contains.

"Dear little One,—My health seems improving, for I have already acquired some strength, and my appetite is tolerably good. I am settled as comfortably here as it is possible to be in Egypt. There are in Cairo two hotels, and I am in the best. The bed-room, which has a southern aspect, is as large as one of your school *dortoirs*, with a ceiling proportionally high, so that, although it is very warm here, there is no lack of air. The table is very good. The cook, who is a Frenchwoman, in consideration of our being countrywomen, gets up little extra-nice dishes for us. I have already taken short walks in the town and in the environs; it is a very rich, curious, and interesting country. I hope you will some day visit it, and that God will permit me to be your *cicerone*—that is, your faithful guide.

"More than ever do I congratulate myself of being a *gr-r-r-rande tragédienne*. Every one we meet is ready to oblige, to serve, and to procure us amusements. Ever since I left Marseilles I have every where met with the most maternal hospitality.

"Your aunt* is very well: she laughs, she sings, she would dance to make me smile, and that is not always easy, for I am often thinking that I am far from my dear little ones. It is true that I find some comfort in the thought that I am a voluntary exile for a few months, in order that I may return to my children strong and healthy, to leave them no more.

"I have just made an effort to write you so long a letter, for writing fatigues and agitates me—two things strictly prohibited by the physicians. I can, therefore, write to no one else by this mail.

"I hope you will prove your gratitude by writing me a long letter. Tell me all your thoughts, and all the news, if you know of any, for we can get no papers here.

"I shall write to my dear parents by the next boat. There was an earthquake in Alexandria while we were there. There was no harm done, but it made a great impression upon me. It is a sublime horror. In Cairo there were several accidents. I must now bid you good-by, inclosing a thousand kisses."

This letter is charming from its simplicity; it was evidently written by the mother herself, and bears no resemblance to those written for her by her too numerous secretaries.

We have also in the above epistle a very amiable and doubtless correct picture of Sarah's endeavors to cheer her invalid sister. Malicious telltales have asserted that this *entente cordiale* did not last long, and that the absence of this kind, laughing, singing sister soon became the most ardent wish of the *tragédienne*. *Apropos* of this, the following little anecdote went the rounds. We give it as we find it in one of the periodicals of that day, without at all warranting its authenticity:

"Sad news from our great *tragédienne:* she suffers from two evils—bronchitis and her sister Sarah. Deeming the immediate removal of the greater evil might ameliorate her condition, and afford her a better chance for future relief from both, she expressed a wish that Mademoiselle Sarah would go to Paris in order to make some purchases there. Her motive was understood.

* Mademoiselle Sarah.

"'I'll ne'er forsake thee,' was the reply of the devoted tyrant, 'unless I get 20,000 francs to comfort me under the affliction the separation will cause me.'

"Rachel thought the grief might be assuaged with less: Sarah was inflexible.

"'Haven't I forsaken America—refused a splendid engagement? Was I not to have married a youth, handsome, wealthy, of noble birth, a descendant of Washington, who was to have acted the *Crispius* at the Odeon? All these have I slighted for thy sake; sure 20,000 francs were but poor compensation for the sacrifice of such advantages!'

"'You're killing me,' cried poor Rachel; 'take 15,000 francs.'

"'20,000 francs or dea-a-a-ath,' sternly replies Sarah. The result is not yet known."

Sarah's temper was too irritable to qualify her for a companion to an invalid, and she was not perhaps able to keep that curb upon it long which immediate danger had rendered necessary. Symptoms of returning health in one sister brought symptoms of returning violence in the other.

Numerous were the anecdotes for which the well-known peculiarities of Rachel's elder sister afforded some foundation. It is not likely that the purveyors of the daily press were very scrupulous as to the veracity of the sayings and doings they recorded of Mademoiselle Sarah. They probably often made their readers merry at her expense with stories entirely of their own invention. Her short sojourn in America after the departure of the other members of the company furnished matter for innumerable absurd reports, among which that of the approaching nuptials with the *descendant of Washington* was not the least laughable, being, moreover, firmly believed by many envious of the bride's good luck.

Though apparently exclusively preoccupied with the care of her health, she could not quite forget that of her pecuniary interests. She remembered that as a *sociétaire* of the Théâtre Français she was entitled to her full salary during her illness just as much as when in active service, and she wrote to prefer her claim. The demand was preposterous, and, had it been put forward by any one else, would have been laughed

at. But the committee was accustomed to the exactions of this despotic queen; they knew, moreover, that their own deliberation was a mere matter of form. She placed no dependence on the issue if left to their decision: she had more faith in her influence in higher quarters than with the comrades whom the grant of her claim would despoil of their earnings to defray her expenses while idle.

The salary of a *sociétaire* amounted to 12,000 francs yearly. Mademoiselle Rachel received 42,000 francs for nine months, during which, indeed, she seldom averaged over three of actual service, and this large sum was allotted her in consideration of the superiority of her talent and of its favorable influence on the receipts of the house. This influence, however, could not be alleged to be exercised during her sojourn in her *congé* on the Nile.

The plea of past services was also subject to discussion. She had undoubtedly done good service to the cause of art, but that she had, as she asserted, made the fortune of the theatre, was contradicted by the unanswerable eloquence of figures. The ten performances given by her in one month produced some 40,000 francs, but, on the other hand, she entailed numberless expenses and disadvantages on the theatre. The exclusive attention of the public being wholly engrossed by the great *artiste*, reacted woefully on the nights she did not play; every thing that was not connected with her was looked upon with little favor; a natural result of this was the discouragement of every other representative of tragic art; the confusion and dissensions her despotism occasioned in the management, her capricious *entrées* and *sorties;* her brother, her sisters, forced on the committee; her lawsuits, her free boxes and seats, her dressing-room, her costumes, were heavy charges to be deducted from the benefits, and somewhat counterbalanced the receipts her presence brought into the treasury.

Mademoiselle Rachel returned to France at the end of May, 1857.

On board the steamer that was bringing her from Egypt there was a missionary bishop, Monseigneur Guillamum, with whom she frequently conversed. Rachel had at all times the most fascinating, winning manners, and now, to a man of that

sacred character, the shadow of death within which he saw her stand must have invested her with a deeper interest.

When the boat stopped at Malta, the prelate took the opportunity to say mass in the Church of St. John in behalf of her who was on the brink of eternity. The object of his solicitude, having known of his pious intention, repaired to the church and heard him officiate.

In his conversations the prelate anxiously exhorted her to alter her course, and, instead of re-entering France, to proceed to Rome and be baptized by the Holy Father. To this she objected on the score of not being prepared to become a convert; "besides," said she, after a few moments' hesitation, "people would say I was playing a part, and that it was done for effect; I can not."

She spent a part of the summer in the environs of Montpellier. While there it was probable that her thoughts recurred more than once to the poor recluse whom she had visited in the prison of that city ten years before, and whose impending fate she had then so eloquently lamented. She, too, the once gay and brilliant favorite of Fortune, whom the sad, proud captive had probably then gazed upon with envy as well as admiration, was herself dying of that dreadful disease that had inspired her with such horror and commiseration, and to which she would have deemed sudden death by a "ball in the chest or a tile on the head some windy day far preferable!" She too was hastening to that unknown land whither the weary, worn, and vexed spirit of her she had so pitied, and the young, buoyant, and light-hearted sister she had so loved, had preceded her.

Her son Alexandre being on the point of going with his tutor to Geneva, where he was to finish his studies, Rachel hastened back to Paris on the night of the 23d of June. Such was her anxiety to embrace her child, that, weak and ill as she was, she would not consent to stop on the way, but came directly through.

Of Rachel's two boys, the eldest, Alexandre, who has been acknowledged by his father, a well-known diplomate, was a very handsome child when quite young. But, as he grew up, this very beauty, derived from his close resemblance to his

mother, became less suitable to his sex. The features and figure are so delicate, small, and feminine, that they lack character, and will give an insignificant appearance to the man.

Gabriel, the youngest child, was, when a baby, as plain as his brother was handsome, and for some little while considered an unwelcome addition to the family. Some one asking Rachel what she thought the second son would be, "His brother's coachman," was the reply.

This apparently unfeeling remark was probably made rather because she would not lose the opportunity of saying what she considered a smart thing, than because she thought it, as she afterward proved herself a kind mother to both her children.

She had allowed the elder child to be the godfather of the younger, and this added link between the boys has given to the affection of Alexandre a character of paternal solicitude, that manifests itself in the most charming and graceful manner on every occasion where his little brother seems to require his assistance or protection. He considers himself his brother's guardian. Unfortunately, the elder has inherited his mother's delicacy of constitution as well as her features.

Gabriel, who at first was clumsy in shape, and whose heavy features promised no beauty, is becoming a very good-looking boy; years are developing a fine athletic form, handsome limbs, and an intelligent countenance.

The children were, on account of the frequent absence of the mother, under the exclusive care and surveillance of their grandmother until the elder was taken charge of by his father. Both were placed at the best schools, and no expense was spared in their education. But in other respects the greatest economy was observed; in all that concerned their dress, parsimony was carried to the utmost limits. Every article, by mending, patching, cleaning, turning, and dyeing, was made to last to the farthest verge of respectability. In a letter written to his mother, who was then in America, the elder lad said, "For all I keep telling grandmamma over and over again that you are to bring home 1,200,000 francs, she won't give me a new suit of clothes, and I have to wear the same shabby one."

It appears that the mother granted the wish, for some little while after, and at the time her cold fastened upon her, she jestingly alluded to the above passage in one of her own letters to the child: "You see, my dear, how imprudent it was in me to go to the expense of 250 francs for your new suit. I have been taken ill, and now good-by to the 1,200,000 francs."

The elder lad was old enough to understand the dangerous nature of his mother's illness, and manifested the most anxious solicitude to have correct information on the subject of her health.

Fearing the truth might be kept from him by his grandmother and aunts—he was probably aware of their system of negation on that subject—he would write to the faithful Rose, adjuring her to tell him exactly how his dear mamma was.

The love of change that had actuated her throughout her life caused her to choose a new residence in Paris when she returned from Egypt, although her hotel, Rue Trudon, and its contents were yet unsold. Her new apartments, No. 9 Place Royal, were much more spacious than those of her own hotel, and she half-jestingly, half-sadly remarked that "there would be plenty of room for those who chose to attend her funeral." Her mournful prevision was not justified by the event; for, with the exception of the palaces and public edifices, no building in Paris would have been spacious enough for the crowd that followed her remains to their last resting-place.

The hotel in the Place Royal had once pertained to the ancient family of Nicolai, and had been inhabited by eminent magistrates and venerable chancellors, one of whom was the President Nicolai, the tutor of Voltaire. This had also been the last residence in Paris of the poet Victor Hugo.

## CHAPTER XXXIII.

1857.

Concealment of Illness.—Bulletins of Health read on the Stage.—Molé.—Nicolet's Monkey-Actors.—Departure for Cannet.—Melancholy Pilgrimage.—Cannes.—Villa at Cannet.—The Dream.—Variations in Health and Spirits.—Farandoles.—Sister Sarah.—Raphael and the Cross.—Last Autograph.—Hebrew Prayer.—Death.—Funeral.

THE state of the *tragédienne's* health prohibiting her remaining in Paris during the winter, Cannet was the residence selected by her medical advisers.

A singular circumstance connected with the illness of Rachel was the doubt so long entertained by the public as to its dangerous nature. This proceeded not only from a long experience of her propensity to feign illness, but also from the care with which her relatives concealed the real state of her health. When her indispositions were for her own convenience, those around her proclaimed them; when there was real cause for alarm, they were no less anxious to conceal it. Rachel's influence was indispensable to her numerous hangers-on; so long as she lived, there was a *prestige* attached to all belonging to her, and that *prestige* was increased or lessened as the danger of losing her became more or less imminent.

A witty *journaliste*, referring to the position of Rachel in her own family, and to the degree of dramatic talent possessed by some of the other members of it, said he was reminded of a *dilettanti habitué* of the Opera, who, during the overture of "Robert le Diable," beat the time very assiduously. His neighbor in the next stall, seeing this philharmonic enthusiasm, and deeming that he might possibly have the honor of touching the elbow of Meyerbeer himself, at last ventured to say, "You are a musician, sir?"

"Not exactly; but I have a brother who owns a musical snuff-box!" In the Felix family, added the narrator, Mademoiselle Rachel was the owner of the musical snuff-box, and its name was *La Tragédie.*

Rachel herself did not scruple to jest on the manner in which she was *exploitée* for the general benefit of her kith and kin, and most willingly permitted of it. Some one remonstrating with her on the occasion of her American trip, she laughingly replied, "Raphael is the wandering Jew, and I am his five sons."

Madame Felix, accompanied by a young relative, was met on the Boulevards within a day or two of her daughter's death by a person who inquired how the *tragédienne* was. The young relative was thoughtlessly replying that the last news was very bad, and that little hope remained, when the elder lady, hastily interrupting her, said it was quite a mistake; Rachel was much better!

During the last century, when any favorite of the theatre-going public was ill, it was customary for one of his or her comrades to give the bulletin of the absent one's health to the audience every evening. On such occasions the spectators frequently testified an interest highly flattering to its object. Sometimes, however, these tokens of sympathy were so exaggerated that they excited the ridicule of less passionate admirers. Thus, when Molé, the celebrated comedian, was kept from the stage by a severe and protracted illness, the report of his physician, which was read nightly, drew from the audience, and more especially from the feminine portion of it, the most absurd demonstrations of feeling.

That there is but a step from the sublime to the ridiculous is most frequently exemplified in France, where criticism is ever on the alert, and humor always in search of a subject. Nicolet, the manager of the little house now known as the Théâtre de la Gaieté, parodied the scenes of silly enthusiasm that took place at the Théâtre Français by giving nightly bulletins of the health of one of his best actors, a favorite monkey then ill.

The public of the present day carry to such an extreme the love of fun and the propensity to criticism, that it was quite as well, perhaps, that no attempt was made to revive the old custom on the occasion of the *tragédienne's* illness.

The 15th of September was the day fixed for her departure. There are in our lives solemn and decisive moments, when the veil that conceals futurity is drawn aside, and our souls are

permitted a glance into the arcana of fate. We are filled with vague instincts, with secret aspirations which we can not account for then, but of which the mystery is solved by subsequent events. At times, for an absence we design shall be but temporary only, we dwell on the farewell as though we were conscious the parting was to be eternal; at others we are tormented by an irresistible longing to revisit places toward which some superhuman power impels us. Rachel was under the influence of some such occult and inexplicable inspiration during the night that preceded her departure for the south of France. Her sleep was of short duration; and although nothing required she should rise early, tormented by an anxious wish to see once more a spot associated with the most memorable events of her life, she was dressed long before the dawning of the tardy autumnal day. To those who remonstrated on her early rising, she peremptorily replied she had a pilgrimage to perform before she left Paris, and that her family could meet and take leave of her at the station.

From her residence in the Place Royale, which she was never to re-enter alive, she drove, passing by the Gymnase, to the Théâtre Français, and, ordering the carriage to stop before it, remained long gazing at the house that had been the scene of her first *débûts* and of fifteen of the most brilliant years of her career. God only knows what her reflections were, as, mute and absorbed in thought, she contemplated the doors which she had entered poor, timid, and unknown, to leave rich, proud, and celebrated. When first she had crossed yon threshold she possessed none of Fortune's gifts, but she was full of hope—of life; now she was rich in all the world prizes, but her cup of life was nearly empty, and, for her hopes, they were faint indeed.

A friend at last roused her from the meditations in which, regardless of the hour, she was indulging, and hurried her off. She leaned her head out of the window as long as the building remained in sight. When she reached the station she spoke but little, bidding, with a sad smile only, what proved to many of the friends assembled there a last adieu. She was carried in a chair from the station to the railway carriage, for she was no longer able to walk.

Cannes, a small town of the Département du Ver, is, or rather should be, the Nice of France. If England owned a spot so prodigally endowed with all the advantages Nature can bestow, a beautiful town would long ago have been built on those smiling margins.

Cannes, situated in a recess of one of the most charming bays of the Mediterranean, and sheltered by the surrounding highlands, is a sort of natural conservatory where reigns a perpetual spring, and where the most delicate valetudinarians find, during the severest winters, a sky ever clear and mild, a balmy atmosphere, and the perpetual emanations of flower-covered fields. Flowers are cultivated in that district as grain and fodder are elsewhere, and fields of violets, of roses, of heliotropes, instead of wheat, oats, and clover, supply a large proportion of the perfumery used in both hemispheres. The Isles of St. Margueritte, which it might not be impossible to unite with each other by means of a dike, close the entrance to the Bay of Cannes, and protect it against storms. The railway of Toulon to Nice, which touches at Cannes, and makes it easy of access, will, in all probability, give to this privileged town the development to which it is in so many respects entitled.

At the present day, however, Cannes of itself offers but few comforts and attractions to strangers. Those who visit it are drawn thither by the pretty villas built in the adjoining valleys, or on the charming heights that surround it, by foreign residents. Lord Brougham has for many years owned a delightful residence here, and the picturesque and splendid chateau of Lord Lowndesborough is worthy of note.

It is only in a villa that any thing like comfort can be obtained by an invalid, but it is very difficult to procure one, as the owners have built them for their own use, and usually reside in them with their families. It is seldom that one can be rented.

The retreat that sheltered Rachel's last days was not in Cannes, but in Cannet, a little village in the environs, of very difficult access. The road to it is from Cannes, and so extremely steep and rugged that at one point it is altogether impracticable to carriages and horses. The visitor to the villa of M. Sardou, where Rachel received so generous a hos-

pitality, is obliged to walk or be carried through the ravines and valleys which forbid its approach, and when he has reached the goal, he finds that difficulties of another nature are yet to be surmounted before he can enter it.

The house, spacious, beautifully situated in an orange grove, and well guarded from the wind, is singularly constructed. The main building has no staircase, consequently the door affords an entrance to the ground floor only. To reach the upper story one must enter the left-hand turret, ascend the stairs to the second floor, cross a bridge connecting with another turret, descend one pair of stairs in that turret, and cross another bridge, which finally leads into the upper stories of the house itself.

The owner of this pretty villa, M. Sardou, formerly of the Grand Opera, placed it at Mademoiselle Rachel's disposal, positively refusing any remuneration, while M. Mario Nechard, the author of "La Fiammina," by whom it was then inhabited, as courteously gave it up to her. No more favorable situation could possibly have been chosen, and the interior of the house was fitted up in a style that bore witness to the owner's taste for the fine arts.

M. Sardou had been the intimate friend of the sculptor David (of Angiers), and many of that artist's works ornamented the rooms. In the best chamber—a spacious one, with high, snow-white walls, adorned with friezes and sculptures in the antique style—the bedstead was also white, and seemed carved of stone. At the foot of the bed was a statue of the Grecian Polhymnia, wearing on its marble features an expression of intense sadness; attired in long, sweeping robes, that had a funereal aspect, she leaned on a pedestal that resembled a tombstone. This figure, which gave the beholder the idea of a mourner sorrowing over a grave, made so painful an impression that it was immediately removed.

But as in the life of every great public character there must always be some remarkable prediction or wonderful dream shadowing forth the coming event previous to some great crisis, the following is said to have occasioned the horror with which the first sight of her dormitory at Cannet filled the mind of the *tragédienne*.

After the performance on the 8th of July, 1852, before an audience of kings and princes, who had admired and complimented her to her heart's content, she had retired to bed in a state of feverish excitement.

That night she had a fearful dream.

A giant's hand, burning like fire, heavy as lead, covered her chest, crushing it despite all her efforts to rid herself of the dreadful weight. She *dreamed* that, awaking with the excruciating pain, she found herself in a room that was not the one she had retired to, in a bed that was not the one she had fallen asleep in; the room was spacious, its tall walls were white, and near the bed was a *prie-dieu* of white marble, over which hung a marble figure.

A voice that seemed to belong to the invisible body under whose visible hands she was writhing uttered several times these words: "Thou shalt die here under my hand! thou shalt die here under my hand!"

The aspect of the chamber at the Villa Sardou was certainly sufficient to convey a melancholy impression to one so ill, and no dream was needed to account for it.

Her health continued for some time to fluctuate capriciously, but during these alternations she daily waxed weaker. One day she would declare herself much better, the next she would be in a state of complete prostration. These physical variations necessarily reacted on the nerves, and her humor varied accordingly.

In the beginning, and while she could still find energy for any kind of employment, she would beguile time doing such work as required no particular attention or nicety, and constantly desired Rose to give her "more towels to hem."

When she felt able she received a few friends, and, when forbidden to speak, listened to their chat or played at cards, always her favorite pastime.

One day, when she was in the enjoyment of one of those occasional moments of "feeling quite well again," with which treacherous consumption deludes the victims it has irretrievably condemned—gleams of sunshine that render the succeeding gloom more terrible—she manifested a desire to go down into the garden. She was immediately carried there, and the

peasants of the neighborhood having assembled, danced for her amusement their Provençal dances, called Ferandoles. But poor Rachel was sustained but by a momentary and feverish excitement; her spirits fell as rapidly as they had risen; she could not bear even these innocent amusements long; a spasm came on that put an end to the improvised *fête*, and the actors stole off like the performers in a comic opera scene, with hushed tread and finger on lip, astonished, frightened, and saddened.

During her sojourn at Cannet Rachel was attended by M. Maure, former representative in both assemblies of the Republic, and a nephew of the eloquent conventionalist Isnard. The medical talent of M. Maure was thought much of in all Provence, but when the danger increased her own physician was sent for from Paris; human skill was, however, powerless; the disease was too deeply rooted.

Her desire to live was intense; the nearer she approached to death, the more despairingly she clung to the life that was escaping her. Her docility to her physicians was implicit; she followed to the letter every prescription, obeyed every hint, asking but to live—to live—to live!

Her sufferings were extreme, and she must have often thought of her sister Rebecca's exclamation under similar circumstances: "Oh God, must one suffer thus to die!"

The *tragédienne* endured patiently, sustained by the hope that she would survive all pain, and she had every consolation that friendship could bring, every comfort that wealth could purchase. Her sister Sarah never left her for a moment; and, as we have already said, although the creature of impulse, and ungovernable in her fits of passion, whenever there was imminent danger she was extremely kind and attentive. Sarah was the only member of her father's family present when the last sad hour came.

The tie between Rachel and Sarah was closer than that which bound them to the other sisters. Between these two there was less distance of time; they had known poverty and want together, they had grown up in evil days, of which Leah, and more especially Dinah, had little remembrance. There were, perhaps, other and far more serious motives on Rachel's

side for the preference shown for Sarah, in whose friendship she had trusted on occasions of difficulty and danger.

Rebecca had at one time been the favorite sister of the *tragédienne*, but when she died there was too great a disparity of age to permit of either of the other girls taking her place.

Raphael, being the only brother, was naturally a favorite, but Rachel especially was always disposed to treat him with unbounded indulgence. An anecdote, related by herself, proves that in early childhood she exercised no small degree of influence over him.

Little Rachel had seen, among the paltry gewgaws, gilt chains, pinchbeck rings, necklaces, &c., exposed for sale in open cases by a neighbor, a trinket she coveted exceedingly—the article that had so much attracted the notice of the child of Israel was, strange to say, a cross! Without, perhaps, any very definite idea of the difference between *meum* and *tuum*, but actuated by the impulse that has led many better-schooled and higher-born children, she commissioned her little brother to steal this cross. The proprietor of the desecrated symbol, having found out who was the thief, carried his complaint to the parents, who were very indignant. The charge being clearly made out, condign punishment was administered to the culprit. Though very severely beaten, the boy maintained a Spartan silence with regard to his accomplice, never attempting to plead the extenuating circumstance of having operated for another. As for Rachel, she used to say she never would forget her feelings when she saw her little brother hauled about by the hair and whipped for doing her bidding. Fright, however, left no room for magnanimity, and she did not confess her participation in the sin, but she learned a lesson that was of no small value—she was taught the consequences of stealing, and what another child acquires with years she did in an hour. She was wont to remark that, when very young, the propensity to steal was very strong in her, but that this incident had effectually cured her.

She had a great passion for gambling, and, when surrounded by her family and intimate friends, was always getting up some game, even if it was but the child's play of loto. She was not very scrupulous in her play, cheating whenever she

got a chance, perfectly delighted when she won a few francs, and quite out of temper if she lost insignificant sums. Yet, after manifesting the utmost vexation and ill-humor because she had lost a few francs, if Raphael came in with some plausible reason for wanting a couple of thousand, she would give them without hesitation.

During her last illness her children were with her, the eldest accompanied by his tutor, and the youngest having been sent from his college of St. Barbe, at her request, to stay with her.

Her mother was not with her when she died, though she had remained with her some time previous to the last moments. Rachel, actuated by the capricious impulse which sometimes led her to do the most unexplainable things, insisted peremptorily, a few days before her death, that Madame Felix should return to Paris and attend to some business for her. She seemed, indeed, to wish all her relatives away, with the exception of Sarah.

Nor were those who had been friends and admirers of the gay and brilliant *tragédienne* forgetful of her when, wasted by disease and saddened by the prospect of approaching dissolution, she could no longer minister to their amusement or gratify their vanity. Prince Napoleon, when at Marseilles, made an excursion to Cannet and visited the poor invalid, who was deeply moved by this proof of his imperial highness's kind remembrance. She could no longer sit up, but the wish to appear to advantage still ruled the heart whose beats were numbered. To receive the visit with which she was to be honored she had caused herself to be dressed in an elegant quilted white silk *peignoir;* a profusion of rich lace concealed the emaciated neck and wrists, and a pretty morning cap shaded the pale cheeks.

Another kind heart, whose sympathy she had less reason to expect, M. Legouvé, the poet, with whom she had had the lawsuit in 1853, hastened from Paris expressly to offer her this last proof of friendship. The breach, *à propos* of "Medée," had recently been made up. A short time before her death Rachel had dictated a charming letter to the poet, in answer to which he had gone to see her. He arrived within four

days of the one that proved her last, and when no one could be admitted.

After having clung so despairingly to life, as the term approached she would at times speak of it calmly, though in reality her hopes were never quite extinguished. A week before her death she admitted a stranger of distinction to see her, and seemed gratified with the sympathy he expressed. To the never-failing request for her autograph, she replied, "Ah! you do well to ask for it now; it will soon be too late." She then wrote on a sheet of paper, "In a week from now I shall begin to be food for worms, and for writers of biographies. RACHEL."

The visitor, shocked at so sinister an anticipation, wished to decline the autograph, but she pushed it toward him, saying, "Take it, take it; it will, perhaps, be the last thing I shall ever write."

On the 22d of December she did write, though with great difficulty, a letter to a very distinguished personage, and dated it January 1st, 1858, accounting for her so doing in these words: "I post-date this letter. * * * * I feel as though the doing so will make me live till then." And she did outlive her date, though but for three days.

From a letter written to M. Sardou, the proprietor of the house in which she died, by a friend who was present, we borrow the following interesting account of her last moments:

"I had felt the approach of the fatal event on Friday, January 1, when we exchanged the compliments of the New Year. Rachel embraced us with so much feeling it was evident that in her own mind she anticipated the eternal adieux. Doctor Bergonier had, however, assured me we might yet expect life would be prolonged a few days.

"On Saturday nothing particular occurred. Rachel remained, as usual, plunged in a sort of stupor, the effect of excessive debility, and from which she was now, at intervals, roused by fits of excessive pain, after which she would again fall asleep. Toward midnight she awoke quite calm, as though out of a long sleep, and chatted familiarly with those around her bed. She desired to write to her father, but had not strength to finish. The letter she was dictating contained her

last requests, but violent spasms of pain compelled her to cease for the time. She remained in a state of complete prostration, and with infinite trouble was made to swallow a little sustenance from time to time.

"At eleven o'clock on Sunday morning the expectoration had become so difficult that it was feared she would choke; an unexpected effort having relieved her, calm succeeded to this crisis. Rachel then expressed a wish to finish the letter to her father. She dictated to the end, read it all over, and then exclaimed,

"'My poor Rebecca, my dear sister, I am going to see thee! I am indeed happy!'

"She then added a few words to the letter, signed it, and appeared to fall asleep. This state lasted several hours.

"Sarah had, up to this moment, hesitated to call in religious assistance; the words uttered by Rachel now decided her, and she dispatched a telegraphic message to the Consistory of Nice, which immediately sent ten persons, men and women. They arrived toward eight o'clock, but they were not introduced for some time in the chamber, lest the sight of them should cause Rachel too great a shock. At ten o'clock there was another fit like that of the morning, which alarmed all the house. This the doctors said would be the last, and the members of the Consistory were summoned. Two women and an old man approached the bed, and began to sing in Hebrew a psalm, beginning,

"'Ascend to God, daughter of Israel.'

"Rachel turned her face calmly toward the singers.

"'Behold, Lord, the agony of Thy handmaid; pity her sufferings; shorten her pains, my God, and let those she endures redeem her sins!

"'In the name of Thy love, God of Israel, deliver her soul; she aspires to return to thee; break the bonds that bind her to dust, and suffer her to appear before Thy glory.'

"The countenance of Rachel seemed illumined by celestial light; the singers continued:

"'The Lord reigneth, the Lord has reigned, the Lord will reign every where and for evermore!

"'Blessed, every where and forever, be the name of His glorious reign!

"'The Eternal One is God! (*seven times*).

"'Listen, Israel, the Eternal, our God, the Eternal is one.

"'Go, then, whither the Lord calleth thee. Go, and may His mercy assist thee. May the Eternal, our God, be with thee; may His immortal angels guide thee to heaven, and may the righteous rejoice when the Lord receiveth thee in His bosom!

"'God of our fathers, revive in Thy mercy this soul that goeth to Thee; unite it to those of the holy patriarchs, amid the eternal joys of the heavenly Paradise! Amen.'

"Rachel pressed Sarah's hand, and expired with a smile upon her lips.

"And the singers said,

"'Blessed be the Judge of Truth!'

"All present were moved by the tokens of heavenly grace Rachel had manifested. It can not be doubted that Rachel died with the hope of another life.

"Until now I had doubted this faith of hers, which, perhaps, was not definite and free from doubt until the last solemn moment. However, I must confess that I had already heard her utter words of religious hope on the occasion of a solemn act of her life, which took place on the 15th of last December.

"But, though she was, to all outward appearance, dead, life was not in reality extinct for some time after the fatal news had been telegraphed to her relatives in Paris. The syncope that preceded death bore so much resemblance to it that even the physicians were deceived by it. The one who was to embalm the body fancied he discerned a slight beating of the artery of the neck. A mirror held to the lips showed no sign of breath, but there was an almost impercepible motion of the heart, which did not cease for some hours."

Rachel had died without a sigh. Of all her relatives, Sarah, who had not left her since her departure from Paris, was the only one present at the last scene. Rose, the faithful maid, who had attended her for twenty years, and decked her for many a triumph, smoothed the pillow under the death-pale cheek. The doctor, the Rabbi of Nice, and ten members of the Consistory, were the other persons present. So calm and beautiful were the features after death that a photograph was taken of them.

The body was embalmed and taken to Paris for interment. When the bier passed through Marseilles, the Rabbi and Consistory of that city came to the station and said prayers over the body, after which the coffin was raised by the members and carried to the railway carriage.

Though every token of respect was paid thus publicly to the remains of this celebrated woman, though they were brought to Paris with all the care, the pomp of woe, that money could procure, a delay, occasioned, as already related, by the fact that death did not really take place at the time it was supposed, gave rise to the most absurd reports. The story ran that, to avoid expense, the body had been put into a common deal packing-case, and sent to the railway to be forwarded to Paris as merchandise; that, in accordance with this denomination, it had been stowed away in the luggage van, but on the arrival of the train at the Lyons station, to the amazement of all, the case was missing! Who could have had any inducement to commit so sacrilegious a theft? None but a lover, of course; consequently it must have been M——. He had been her first love. After a rupture that had lasted years, during which each had sought consolation elsewhere, the breach had been healed, the friendly intercourse resumed, the tie cemented anew. Rachel had no sooner undertaken the transatlantic excursion that had proved so fatal than she longed to return to Europe. To the addresses of new admirers she replied by showing the portrait of M——. On her arrival in France, she had, with her sister Sarah, been on a visit at his country residence, and when her health sent her to Egypt, she had been followed thither by her faithful friend. M—— was largely interested in the Lyons railway, and could easily possess himself of the case that contained all that remained of her he had loved. The object of the theft was to inter the precious remains in his own grounds, and erect there a monument over which he might mourn unseen by profane eyes.

The arrival of Sarah, accompanying the remains, at last silenced the indefatigable newsmongers, and the funeral obsequies were performed according to the Jewish rites, in the Israelite division of the cemetery of Père la Chaise. The hearse was preceded by the Grand Rabbi of the Jewish Consistory

of Paris, and followed by the father, brother, and youngest boy as chief mourners. The ribbons were held by MM. Alex. Dumas (the elder), Auguste Maquet, Chairman of the Society of Dramatic Authors, M. Geoffroy, *sociétaire* of the Théâtre Français, and Baron Taylor.

Notwithstanding the inclemency of the weather, the crowd was immense. Perhaps no dramatic artist was ever followed to the grave by so numerous a *cortège* of distinguished writers. Among these illustrious were MM. Scribe, Alphonse de Vigny, St. Beuve, Emilie Augier, Legouvé, Viennet, and other members of the Academy; M. Camille Doucet, from the Ministère d'Etat; M. Emile de Girardin; MM. Halevy, Alexander Dumas, Auguste Barbier, Fiorentino, Mario Nehaud, Arsène Houssaye, Louis de Ratisbonne, Latour de St. Ybars, Michael Levy, and the managers of the Parisian theatres. The majority of the *artistes* of the Grand Opera, Théâtre Français, Opera Comique, &c., &c., were also there.

Funeral orations were spoken by MM. Jules Janin, Auguste Maquet, and Bataille.

The public testimony the rabbi's words afforded that the *tragédienne* had died in the faith of the people was probably introduced in his discourse on account of the reports circulated that in her heart, at least, she was a Catholic, in corroboration of which it was asserted that during her last illness she had constantly worn on her bosom an image of the Virgin, and that, so long as she had strength to read any thing, her favorite book was the "Imitation." How far this was true it is difficult to say, as Sarah was too stanch a Jewess not to conceal from every eye any such manifestations of apostasy if they had existed. Rachel herself, even at the last hour, gave no positive indication of a preference for any particular creed, not even of the one she was born in, and of which she had never been a strict observer.

But while so many men, ranking high in the different branches of literature and art, had hastened to testify, by their presence, the loss sustained by the classic drama, the absence of one whose place no other could fill was noticed with surprise. M. Sanson, the professor whose lessons during so many years had so largely contributed to the success of Mademoi-

selle Rachel, and who was expected, as the representative of the Comédie Française, to have pronounced her funeral oration, was not even present at the burial. The reason soon became public. On the previous Saturday, M. Empis, the manager of the Comédie Française, had received a letter from M. Felix, sen., the purport of which was that he hoped some one would speak, in the name of the company, at the interment of his daughter, appointed to take place on the following Monday, but, at the same time, peremptorily rejecting M. Sanson as the orator.

The letter having been communicated to the *sociétaires*, this expression of hostility toward a comrade who was loved and esteemed by all was very properly resented, and it was resolved that no one should take the place of him whom merit and priority of standing in the company entitled to represent it.

Thus it was fated that dissensions and petty quarrels should accompany her career even beyond the grave.

# APPENDIX.

It might have been supposed that the curtain had dropped over the closing scene, and that the last French *tragédienne* had been left to rest in the tomb hallowed by the memory of genius. Not so. Scarcely three months had elapsed since she was laid in her grave when her name, placarded all over Paris, once more called the public, when the curtain was once more raised. This time the after-piece acted was sadder than any tragedy in which she had, living, borne a part; it was entitled "Vente Après Décés de Mademoiselle Rachel." The only articles it had been thought necessary to specify in these notices were the *china* and *fine wines*.

The *tragédienne* had been, throughout her career, the stay and chief support of her father's family. She had been *exploitée* for their benefit as much as for her own, to the last gasp, and now that she was dead it occurred to the children of Israel that something more might be made out of her remains. The spoils were to be divided, and, as it is not the custom in these degenerate days to cast lots for the raiment of the dead, hers was put up at auction.

Great ingenuity was exerted in order to make the most of the prestige attached to every thing that had belonged to Rachel. Every article was classed, and a number of catalogues were distributed all over the country. The sale was pompously announced, and private and public exhibition days appointed, with all the ceremonial of *sergents de ville* to guard the treasures, and *cicerones* to explain them.

The show was a sad one. The things that had become identified with the mistress whom they had contributed to adorn and beautify, that with her had had their home sacred and inviolate, were now but so many goods and chattels, inventoried, catalogued, numbered, ready to come under the hammer, thence to be scattered abroad in every direction.

In one room, on tables, were displayed the ornaments and properties pertaining to each character; the damascened corslet, the casque and gauntlets of *Joan of Arc;* the gem-hilted poniard of *Roxane;* the Egyptian diadem of *Cléopâtre;* and the cameos of *Phèdre;* the tiaras and sceptres of the royal dames the *tragédienne* had evoked from their lethargic sleep, and that now had died with her who had personified them so well. Against the walls were arranged the theatrical cos-

tumes. On a near inspection, it was evident that the dresses were made of the most costly materials; but, as they hung there, lank, limp, and shapeless, empty of the lithe form that had given such classic grace to their folds, such queenly dignity to their sweeping trains, the rich vestures gave the place the appearance of a costumier's show-room.

Had they voices, what disclosures those embroidered bodices, those jeweled crowns might make of the passionate workings of the heart they had covered, the brain they had encircled! Little, however, did the careless crowd trouble itself with such conjectures as it passed along, commenting on all it saw and on all it had heard, on the probable value of the gewgaws, and on the errors of her who had worn them.

In another room were arranged the plate and real jewels, the latter in show-cases much after the manner in which those of some crowned heads were seen at the two great Exhibitions in London and Paris, and really almost as worthy admiration. The imperial and royal gifts, each recording some triumph of which it had been the brilliant reward, were placed conspicuously.

The library, though not extensive, was valuable, inasmuch as many of the books, having been presented by the authors, Hugo, Lamartine, Ponsard, Emilie Augier, and others of the most admired modern poets, contained their autographs, and, in some cases, complimentary verses addressed to the *tragédienne*. Among the works of the theatrical *repertory* were tragedies with alterations, additions, and remarks in the handwriting of Talma, to whom they had belonged; others had been similarly annotated by the late owner.

Among the smaller articles of *ménage* was a cup of Sèvres porcelain, which was doubly valuable from having also pertained to two theatrical celebrities: its first owner was Mademoiselle Clairon. The paintings and richest portion of the furniture had been disposed of at the sale of the effects in the Hotel Trudon, some time before Mademoiselle Rachel's death.

So far there was nothing very objectionable in the exhibition. It was probably necessary that the plate, jewels, and other articles should be sold, in order to make a division of the property in accordance with the will of the deceased. But it really seemed unnecessary, as well as grossly indelicate, to make a public exhibition and sale of the personal linen of the *tragédienne;* if the family could not make some arrangement among themselves with regard to such articles, they might, at least, have been more privately disposed of. The whole stock—and it was a larger one than many ready-made linen warehouses contain—together with the dresses, shawls, and laces, was set down in a separate catalogue, and displayed in the bed-chamber. The petticoats of *Adrienne Lecouvreur* and the hose of *Marie Stuart* were to be knocked down to the highest bidder, as well as the peplum of *Camille* and mantle of *Phèdre*.

Here, too, was to be seen the only creature whose countenance indi-

cated a consciousness of the desecration going on. By the bed, on which was spread a small fortune in laces, sat a woman past the middle age, whose thin figure was clothed in mourning, and around whose wrinkled features the border of a black cap, unrelieved by a bit of white, was just visible. This was Rose, in whose care for twenty years the wardrobe of Mademoiselle Rachel had always remained. She still sat there, faithful to her trust to the last, the poor old waiting-maid who had seen the commencement and the close of the *tragédienne's* career, who had decked her so often with that finery, and who, with the same trembling hands, had attired her in her last dress.

What her feelings were needed no telling. In the deep lines around the compressed lips grief and anger were mingled, and the look in the dark eyes that glared at each stranger who approached to examine the laces on the bed was one of hatred and defiance. Though the figure was motionless, though the head never turned, the look followed you; you could not get rid of it; it reached whatever good feeling lay underneath the thick coating of selfishness with which experience of the world had covered your heart; you felt thoroughly ashamed of the idle curiosity that had brought you there to overhaul those sad relics, and, unheeding the admonitions of the Cerberus in the shape of a *sergeant de ville*, bawling out at short intervals, "Passez, Messieurs; passez, Mesdames," you hastened to make your escape.

The same eye to effect that had presided over the arrangement of the different articles had organized the sales. In lieu of the crowd of sordidly-clothed, dirty-faced, hook-nosed, long-bearded, cunning-eyed dealers in second-hand goods, hustling, jostling, elbowing, and crushing the toes of any luckless wight whose decent appearance proclaimed him not one of them, the respectable-looking bidders who filled the rows of velvet-covered benches looked as though they had met there to hear morning concerts. The auctioneer himself spoke in subdued tones, as though he were murmuring prayers, to which the attentive audience gave the responses.

The buyers were, as we have already said, of the better classes at these sales, with the exception, however, of the two days on which the costumes were sold, when numerous costumiers and *marchandes à la toilette* came in search of bargains. Thus many a gay masquerader will unconsciously polk, and quadrille, and waltz in a fancy garb made of the robes in which *Camille* has uttered her fierce anathemas, or *Phèdre* lamented her fatal love.

Among other attempts made to give additional interest to some of the articles sold, the old story of the guitar was revived by some of the papers in behalf of an instrument of the kind that was coming under the hammer. But this was beyond even the boldness of an auctioneer. When it came to be the turn of the guitar, he said that it "had been erroneously announced that this was the instrument with which Mademoiselle Rachel, when a child, had sung in the *cafés*. Still this guitar was valuable, inasmuch as it had been ten years in the *tragédienne's*

possession, and was occasionally used by her *en souvenir* of her first calling." How little the bidders credited even this more modest statement was evident in the price the guitar brought—10 francs: as it was quite new and clean, it was much less than its market value.

THE END.

HARPER & BROTHERS will send either of the following Works by Mail, postage paid (for any distance in the United States under 3000 miles), on receipt of the Money.

# MISS MULOCH'S NOVELS.

The Novels, of which a reprint is now presented to the public, form one of the most admirable series of popular fiction that has recently been issued from the London press. They are marked by their faithful delineation of character, their naturalness and purity of sentiment, the dramatic interest of their plots, their beauty and force of expression, and their elevated moral tone. No current Novels can be more highly recommended for the family library, while their brilliancy and vivacity will make them welcome to every reader of cultivated taste.

**John Halifax, Gentleman.** 8vo, Paper, 50 cents.

**Olive.** 8vo, Paper, 25 cents.

**Avillion, and other Tales.** 8vo, Paper, 50 cents.

**The Ogilvies.** 8vo, Paper, 25 cents.

**The Head of the Family.** 8vo, Paper, 37½ cents.

**Agatha's Husband.** 8vo, Paper, 37½ cents.

**A Hero, and other Tales.** 12mo, Muslin, 75 cents.

**Nothing New.** Tales. 8vo, Paper, 50 cents.

*Published by HARPER & BROTHERS,*
*Franklin Square, New York.*

# Harper's Catalogue.

---

A New Descriptive Catalogue of Harper & Brothers' Publications, with an Index and Classified Table of Contents, is now ready for Distribution, and may be obtained gratuitously on application to the Publishers personally, or by letter inclosing Six Cents in Postage Stamps.

The attention of gentlemen, in town or country, designing to form Libraries or enrich their Literary Collections, is respectfully invited to this Catalogue, which will be found to comprise a large proportion of the standard and most esteemed works in English Literature —comprehending more than two thousand volumes — which are offered, in most instances, at less than one half the cost of similar productions in England.

To Librarians and others connected with Colleges, Schools, &c., who may not have access to a reliable guide in forming the true estimate of literary productions, it is believed this Catalogue will prove especially valuable as a manual of reference.

To prevent disappointment, it is suggested that, whenever books can not be obtained through any bookseller or local agent, applications with remittance should be addressed direct to the Publishers, which will be promptly attended to.

PN 2638 F44M 1858

Memoirs of Rachel

PLEASE DO NOT REMOVE
CARDS OR SLIPS FROM THIS POCKET

UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO LIBRARY